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DS–17 FARMER DISCUSSION GROUP PAMPHLET

THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The Foreign-trade Problem
The Weather and the Ever-normal Granary
Industry and Agriculture
Coordination of Farm Management, County Planning and National Farm Policies

WHAT ABOUT COTTON?

The Foreign Market
Price Policies and New Uses for Cotton
Uniformity and Quality of Staple
What Cotton Does to the Land
The Cotton Program
Economic Democracy—the Cotton Referendum and the Administration of the Program

ISSUED JUNE 1938

United States Department of Agriculture
The Extension Service and the
Agricultural Adjustment Administration Cooperating

This pamphlet has been especially prepared for use by discussion groups. Its purpose is to present some of the more pressing problems of the cotton farmer, and it is so arranged as to provide material for six or eight meetings of a discussion group. No statement contained herein shall be taken as an official expression by the Department of Agriculture. Charts and tables present accurate information; but the text is intended primarily to stimulate discussion and includes a considerable amount of controversial material.

Copies of this pamphlet may be obtained free from your State Discussion-group Leader, Extension Service, State College of Agriculture. Copies may also be obtained free upon a request addressed to Program Planning Division, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Other pamphlets for discussion-group purposes are similarly obtainable:

SUBJECT-MATTER PAMPHLETS FOR THE 1936–37 SEASON

DS–1 What Should Be the Farmers' Share in the National Income?
DS–2 How Do Farm People Live in Comparison With City People?
DS–3 Should Farm Ownership Be a Goal of Agricultural Policy?
DS–4 Exports and Imports—How Do They Affect the Farmer?
DS–5 Is Increased Efficiency in Farming Always a Good Thing?
DS–6 What Should Farmers Aim to Accomplish Through Organization?
DS–7 What Kind of Agricultural Policy Is Necessary to Save Our Soil?
DS–8 What Part Should Farmers in Your County Take in Making National Agricultural Policy?

SUBJECT-MATTER PAMPHLETS FOR THE 1937–38 SEASON

DS– 9 Taxes: Who Pays, What For?
DS–10 Rural Communities: What Do They Need Most?
DS–11 Soil Conservation: Who Gains By It?
DS–12 Co-ops: How Far Can They Go?
DS–13 Farm Finance: What Is a Sound System?
DS–14 Crop Insurance: Is It Practical?
DS–15 Reciprocal Trade Agreements: Hurting or Helping the Country?
DS–16 Farm Security: How Can Tenants Find It?

PAMPHLETS ON THE DISCUSSION METHOD

D–3 What Is the Discussion Leader's Job?

THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

This pamphlet is intended to encourage widespread discussion of the farm program and to set forth the issues which farmers themselves will finally have to settle. What are these issues? What are the facts? What are the problems? What can we do something about? What can't we do anything about? How do some of these issues affect the individual farmer?

What about farm exports and imports? What about the weather? How does our industrial situation affect the farm problem? What is the relation between restricting production and farm prices? Should we pay more attention to developing markets for farm products, and less to limiting production? What would happen if we just quit having national farm programs and let each farmer work out his own problems?

Some of these issues are common to all parts of the country; they apply equally to wheat farmers, cotton planters, corn-hog producers, dairymen. But as we go further into the issues, particular problems break off and require separate treatment; because there are special problems which each region must work out itself. Therefore, this pamphlet starts out with the same set of problems that will appear in other pamphlets of this series; but the latter part of this pamphlet deals more particularly with **the problems confronting the cotton farmer.** Other pamphlets deal similarly with the problems of wheat, corn-hog, and dairy farmers. A farmer-discussion group can spend several sessions on the problems raised in this pamphlet; and spend them profitably, if some of these issues can be clarified in the minds of the group.

THE FOREIGN-TRADE PROBLEM

Most farmers are affected by our foreign trade.—We normally raise more wheat, cotton, hog products, and tobacco than we consume; and, unless we can sell our surplus production abroad, we must cut down our production on the farm or accept lower prices in order to stimulate a wider market, and we may perhaps even then fail to sell all we produce. This problem of foreign markets especially concerns the cotton farmer, but it is also a major issue confronting every farmer in the United States. For, even if he doesn't raise export products—if he is a dairy farmer, say—the farmer who does raise corn or wheat or cotton now, may later decide to raise something else; and that something else may be dairy products, and that means increased competition and probably lower prices for the dairy farmer. What shall we do about the foreign-market problem? And it is clear that "we" refers to every farmer in the United States.

On the one hand, we can keep on growing wheat and cotton and corn and hogs and tobacco, and even increase our efficiency in producing these products. This may mean lower prices, but the increased production may or may not return a higher farm income. The lower prices may induce more purchasing. There is a limit to the amount of food that the American people can consume, even at very low prices, but the lower prices may regain our foreign market for us. Improvement in quality may attract better world prices; and better farm management may reduce costs so as to produce a satisfactory net farm income. Some people say that we have no right to curtail production, especially of food or fiber, so long as there are so many people who do not have enough food to eat or clothes to wear.

On the other hand, farm prices can go about so low, after which the cash income is not enough to meet the outlay for rent or interest, taxes, machinery, fertilizer,

clothes, fuel, etc.; and a farmer may as well quit farming as go on that way. And then, too, in order to produce a large enough quantity of wheat or cotton or corn, at very low prices, the land may suffer and be worn out. Why should a farmer be expected to supply consumers either at home or abroad with food and fiber produced by back-breaking work and sold at bankrupt prices? Better find out what the market for farm products can absorb, at prices that will give the farmer a satisfactory net income, and then adjust our national production to that figure. Then small or gradual increases in production could be tried, in order to see whether the resulting lower prices will increase the market demand, especially abroad, and absorb the increased production. As a matter of fact, most foreign countries are so afraid of being starved in the next war, that they are trying to raise as much food as they possibly can; they may not even respond to our lower prices, for they are trying to buy as little from us as they can, so as to encourage their own home production.

And then there is **the problem of imports** of farm products. Why should an agricultural country like ours import any farm products? Of course, some things which are classed as farm products we cannot ourselves grow—coffee, tea, rubber, silk, cocoa, bananas, etc. Some things we can grow, but not enough for home consumption—sugar, vegetable oils, and some high-quality products—and these imports present a difficult problem because of their competition with home-grown products. Cane sugar competes with beet sugar, coconut oils with cottonseed oil and butter and lard, Polish ham and Canadian cheese with our own products; and then, too, it must be remembered that bananas compete with oranges and apples. And there we are, facing the fact that competition, whether foreign or domestic, is a very complicated thing. People may spend their money for tobacco instead of candy, radios instead of food, rayon or silk or wool or even paper instead of cotton, oil furnaces instead of coal furnaces, automobiles instead of houses or furniture or clothes, and so on. Shall we try to stop all imports which

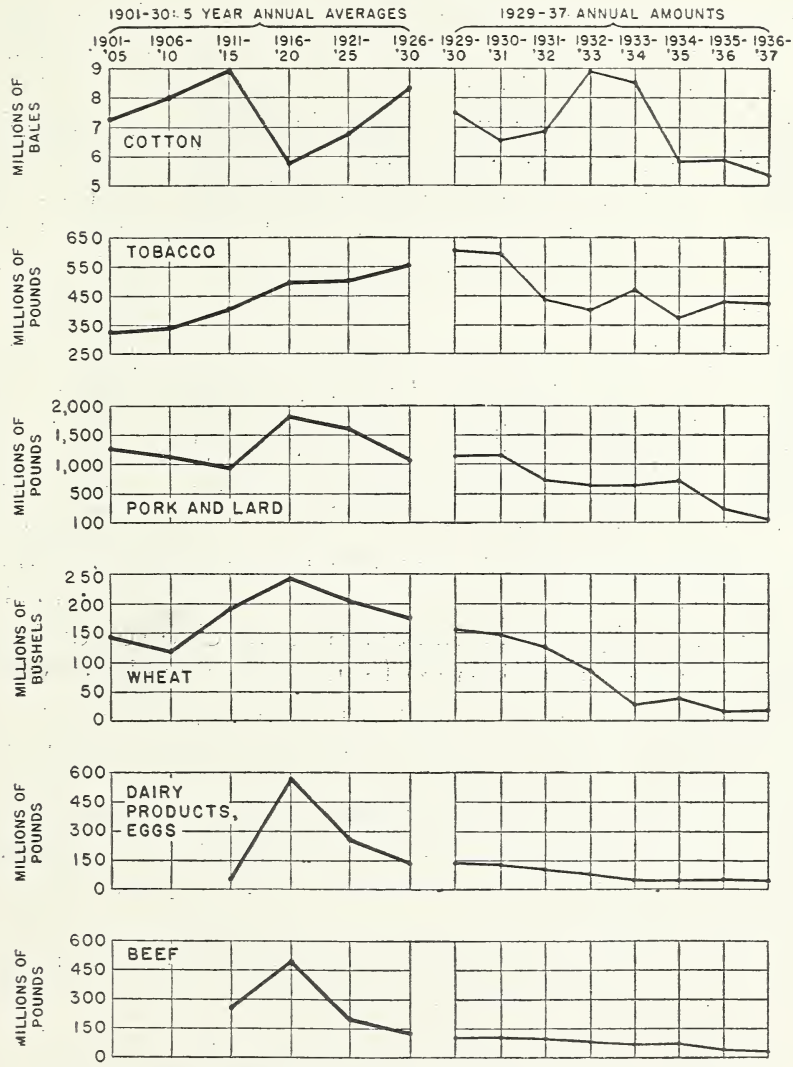
compete in any way with farm products of the United States? Some people think so.

In some ways, **the farmer himself may individually benefit by imported farm products.** Suppose he is a dairyman or a feeder of beef cattle or hogs, and suppose a drought has resulted in a shortage of feed and pasture and in high prices for hay and grain; now what about importing some Argentine corn? And what if our supply of pork products is so low and prices are so high that many people quit buying pork and even get out of the habit of eating pork; wouldn't some imported bacon or ham help to keep up the pork-buying habits of these consumers? Or suppose that our farm products—ham or cheese, for example—are not so well processed as are those from abroad; aren't we losing a large quality market by keeping such goods out? May we not learn to improve our products by some competition from abroad? Should we ever keep out anything that is of better quality than we do produce at home? And if foreign countries are going to buy from us—let's forget about how they are going to repay the money we loaned them—they must sell us their goods; they have only a very limited amount of gold, and we may have more than is good for us or than we know what to do with. And some of those goods they want to sell us in exchange are bound to be farm products or indirect competitors with farm products.

What are the facts about our foreign trade? Perhaps the best way of approaching this problem of foreign trade, is to look at the figures of exports and imports of farm products. Here they are, showing trends for a number of years back. What do you make of them? How would you manage our foreign trade if you had the opportunity and the power? What do you think of the Reciprocal Trade Treaties we have been making with some foreign countries, to restore some of our foreign markets? Let's remember that, in spite of the growth of "self-contained nationalism," foreign countries are buying a lot of farm products from us. This year we may sell almost 100 million bushels of wheat to Belgium, Italy,

the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and others; and our exports of cotton have been running larger than a year

Chart I.—Annual exports and 5-year annual averages of 6 farm products from the United States



ago, England and continental Europe having taken almost a million bales more than they did a year ago.

Table 1.—Exports of 6 farm products from the United States, by 5-year average quantities and by annual quantities

[Figures in parentheses indicate percentage exports to total production in the United States]

Period	Cotton	Tobacco	Pork products	Wheat (flour)	Dairy products	Beef products
	5-YEAR ANNUAL AVERAGES					
	Millions of bales	*Millions of pounds*	*Millions of pounds*	*Millions of bushels*	*Millions of pounds*	*Millions of pounds*
1901–05	7.3 (67)	326 (35)	993 (9)	144 (21)	58	243
1906–10	8.0 (68)	334 (34)	1,825 (14)	119 (18)	567	488
1911–15	8.9 (63)	408 (39)	1,634 (12)	194 (24)	263	199
1916–20	5.7 (48)	497 (33)	1,097 (8)	243 (28)	143	123
1921–25	6.7 (59)	497 (39)		207 (24)		
1926–30	8.3 (56)	553 (39)		175 (18)		
	ANNUAL QUANTITIES					
1929–30	7.4 (45)	600 (39)	1,112 (8)	154 (17)	135	101
1930–31	6.5 (50)	591 (36)	1,139 (9)	149 (13)	122	102
1931–32	6.8 (53)	432 (28)	791 (6)	126 (13)	97	98
1932–33	8.9 (67)	400 (39)	680 (5)	82 (4)	72	79
1933–34	8.5 (60)	473 (35)	686 (5)	27 (5)	45	74
1934–35	5.8 (51)	375 (35)	706 (5)	37 (7)	43	79
1935–36	5.9 (57)	433 (33)	355 (4)	16 (3)	51	41
1936–37	5.4 (43)	425 (36)	159 (1)	19 (3)	33	32

Sources: Agricultural Statistics, 1937, U. S. Department of Agriculture; The Agricultural Situation, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Comments: Charts and tables on exports of farm products and on general imports—Things to note and study:

1. These are the six most important farm exports, as regards both volume and value; and in the table they are shown about in the same order as their importance in total dollar value would warrant. Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage of exports to total production in the United States.

2. Note that our exports of all six, except cotton and tobacco, have been below normal, and have been declining, since 1929.

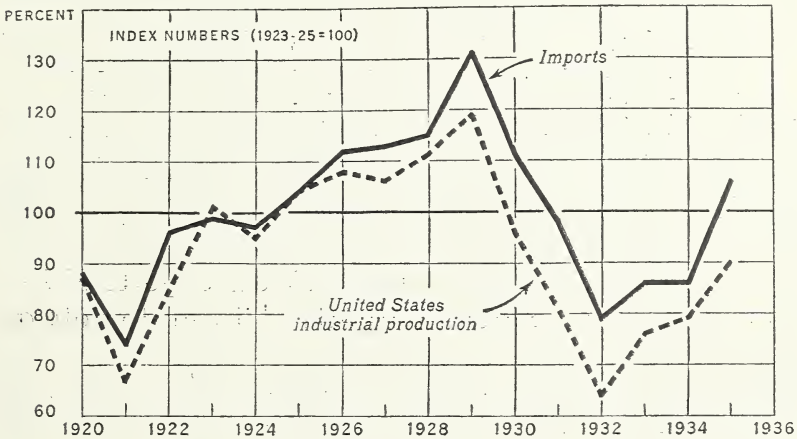
3. Cotton exports were up in 1932–33 and 1933–34; production was especially high in 1931, when it was over 17 million bales; and prices that the farmer got had been low ($47 a bale in 1930; $28, in 1931; $33, in 1932; and $51, in 1933). Did the low prices of 1930, 1931, and 1932

encourage the increase in the exports of our cotton in 1932–33 and 1933–34? If they did, can the farmer afford to raise cotton for export at that price?

4. Cotton exports were low in 1934–35, 1935–36, and 1936–37; during those years a bale of cotton brought the farmer about $62 in 1934, $56 in 1935, and $61 in 1936. Can the cotton farmer afford to take less in order to try, by lowering prices, to increase cotton exports?

5. For the last 35 or 40 years we have been exporting a little over 57 percent of the cotton we raised; but in

Chart II.—Quantity of general agricultural and nonagricultural imports into the United States, and industrial production in the United States, by years, 1920–35.



recent years, except for 1932–33 and 1933–34, cotton exports have averaged less than that—only a little more than 50 percent of our crop. Shall we accept this latter figure as a satisfactory goal for cotton exports, or should we try to raise that figure by accepting lower prices or some other way? In either case, what effect would our policy have on domestic demands for cotton? How would or should these results affect our production policies?

6. The cotton farmer is interested in our foreign-trade problem largely as an exporter. Table 2 and chart II show the trend of imports of agricultural products; the figures in parentheses show the percentage these imports are of our annual production of that product.

7. In chart II the trend of general imports including both farm and nonfarm goods is shown in comparison with the trend of industrial production; note how they go up and down together, showing that imports rise and fall with the price level, as one would expect. Which policy appeals to you as the sounder: (a) To keep out imports by high tariffs, or (b) to stimulate industrial production, even if it means increased imports?

Table 2.—Imports of farm products into the United States, by 5-year average quantities and by annual quantities

[Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of domestic production]

Period	Corn	Wheat [1] (and flour)	Cotton	Dairy and egg products	Live cattle	Beef products
	Millions of bushels	*Millions of bushels*	*Thousands of bales*	*Millions of pounds*	*1,000 head*	*Millions of pounds*
5-YEAR ANNUAL AVERAGES						
1901–05	--------	1	146 (1)	--------	--------	--------
1906–10	--------	1	195 (2)	--------	--------	--------
1911–15	--------	3	323 (2)	71	--------	[2] 182.3
1916–20	--------	26 (3)	344 (3)	47	--------	102.5
1921–25	--------	17 (2)	369 (3)	136	--------	34.3
1926–30	--------	16 (2)	352 (2)	176	--------	84.2
ANNUAL QUANTITIES						
1929–30	0.4	13 (2)	396 (3)	173	505	135.7
1930–31	1.6	19 (2)	112 (1)	150	234	112.7
1931–32	.6	13 (1)	138 (1)	84	95	20.0
1932–33	.3	9 (1)	136 (1)	67	106	23.4
1933–34	.2	11 (2)	156 (1)	61	82	31.9
1934–35	3.0	25 (5)	112 (1)	51	66	39.8
1935–36	43.2	47 (8)	168 (1)	77	378	74.5
1936–37	31.5	40 (6)	151 (1)	63	410	94.6

[1] Including wheat imported for milling in bond and export.
[2] 1914 and 1915 only; not including canned beef.

Source: *Agricultural Statistics*, 1937, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The trouble with the weather is that we can do so little about it.—We can get in out of the rain, or heat our houses, and wear heavy or light clothes if we are fortunate enough to have two suits. Sometimes we can't even control our own tempers when the weather doesn't suit us. We can study the charts the Weather Bureau publishes, but they warn us only a day or two in advance, and sometimes they do not forecast correctly. But, even if the weather can be predicted, to know that a storm is coming, or that a drought is to continue, doesn't help much; we may not want either, but we can't do anything about it. And we can exercise practically no control over the weather that influences the yields of our crops—either the good weather that produces "bumper" crops, or the bad weather that brings drought or floods or hail. It can safely be said that the weather has more influence on crops than has human intelligence; and that we can do less about it than we can about our foreign markets. And since **the consumption of farm products is a fairly stable matter,** the weather presents the farmer with his biggest production problem: **bumper crops may bring a price disaster,** and drought or hail may hurt a great many people or single out some particular farmer for especial ruin. What are we going to do about it? And what can we do about it?

One thing we can do is to find out more facts about the weather.—Even if this means bad news, some people would prefer to know what is what, rather than go on in ignorance of what is bound to happen. And new facts are being discovered all the time. Some scientists believe that the weather has its periods, its long-range swings from drought to wetness, like the seasons of the year. They are collecting the figures on rainfall and temperature, and are

trying to calculate from those whether there is any order to the changes in the past; they are even examining the tree rings, the "grain" that one sees when a tree is sawed across and that marks the annual growth, so as to get records from various parts of the country hundreds of years back. These scientists are also studying the ocean currents and the great air movements, especially the "prevailing westerlies" or those that follow the great river valleys, to see whether our weather is like the hot-water or hot-air heating systems of our homes; and they are searching the upper, or "stratosphere," regions of the atmosphere, and the regions around the North and South Poles, for possible "weather breeders." The scientist is even studying the sun spots, and here feels pretty sure that he has a clue to the prime cause of our weather cycles. For more practical purposes, weather observers are located all over the country, and report daily to the Weather Bureau at Washington. And all of this information is being used to predict, as accurately as possible, what the weather is going to be in all parts of the country—tomorrow, next day, within the near future, and in the long run. True, we are still in the rule-of-thumb stage, but we are seemingly getting somewhere. But the interesting fact is that, however well we may seem to be able to predict the weather, we do not seem to be able to do anything much about changing it. We simply know what to adjust ourselves to. But at least that is something.

If it helps to know more about what the weather is likely to be, it may also be better **to know approximately how much farm production is going to be.** At least, we think that such information is better than ignorance. And so we station crop observers all over the United States, and in foreign countries all over the world, who make periodic reports on the sales and supplies on hand, and on the condition of the growing crops of wheat and corn and cotton, etc. Now, it is easy to see how such information helps the traders on the exchanges; indeed, many of them have their own observers in the field to report the very same items, and to have this knowledge in

advance of the other fellow is quite an advantage. **But what good does it do the farmer?** Suppose he learns, as his crops keep growing, that there is going to be a very heavy production of cotton or wheat; what can he do about it? Everybody else knows this too, so he cannot rush to market as soon as his wheat is harvested, or his cotton is picked, and get an advantage that way. He may, by knowing about a possible heavy production, keep his crop from market for awhile, if he can afford to do this; and this may or may not turn out well for him. But just what other advantage is it to the farmer to have such information? Of course, now farmers do have it; whereas, before, only a few traders had any at all. At least they cannot take advantage of him in an expected shortage, or "bear down" over hard in a surplus-production year. Then, too, at planting time, the farmer can control his acreage somewhat according to the figures on supplies, carryover and prospects. But the trouble is that a reported shortage will also encourage so many other farmers to produce that commodity, that a surplus of production may result. And if a reported surplus will drive a lot of farmers out of producing that commodity, so that a short supply and high prices follow, a farmer would never forgive himself if he, too, had done the "smart" thing and not raised much of that product.

Notice the problem the farmer is facing here. He cannot control the weather—swings of drought and wetness, or the seasons or their intensity—but the weather, to a large degree, determines the size, and even the quality, of the crops. In the meantime, the farmer's knowledge of what to expect, in weather and in crop production, is becomingly increasingly great and accurate. **What are we going to do if we know, from these facts, that production is going to be far greater than the market can possibly absorb?** Or what are we going to do if we know that feed will be short? Sometimes we can plant late crops, or replant earlier ones, and help ourselves a little, but this doesn't solve the big farm problems. Shall we turn all our efforts toward developing our foreign

markets or letting down the tariff walls? Shall we let the weather determine our whole production policy and then see what we can do with the results? Or shall we plow under the surplus production, or store it, or burn some of it, or what?

Table 3.—Temperatures: Normal, 1936, and 1937, by monthly averages, at specified points (degrees Fahrenheit)

	January			February			March			April		
	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937
Lynchburg, Va	37.5	32.4	45.3	40.3	34.6	39.6	47.3	51.4	45.2	57.3	54.0	56.0
Charlotte, N. C	41.2	37.7	49.4	43.9	40.3	43.6	50.4	55.0	50.4	59.8	57.3	59.2
Charleston, S. C	49.9	47.1	61.7	52.4	48.4	51.0	57.4	59.9	57.0	64.5	64.5	64.6
Thomasville, Ga	51.0	52.4	64.7	55.0	50.6	54.6	60.2	63.0	57.9	66.7	66.1	65.8
Jacksonville, Fla	55.4	54.9	67.5	58.0	53.7	57.9	62.6	64.7	60.8	68.7	68.9	68.3
Memphis, Tenn	40.9	36.4	44.4	44.3	36.6	42.8	52.3	57.4	47.8	61.8	58.6	62.6
Birmingham, Ala	45.1	41.6	56.4	48.0	43.7	46.4	55.4	59.4	52.0	63.3	60.9	62.6
Meridian, Miss	47.0	44.4	57.6	49.6	45.8	48.4	57.1	61.6	52.8	64.0	62.1	64.8
Shreveport, La	47.0	44.6	50.2	50.9	44.6	51.1	58.3	63.7	54.4	65.8	64.8	66.6
Amarillo, Tex	35.3	35.6	30.8	38.1	33.5	40.4	46.9	52.2	44.2	55.8	58.0	57.5
Galveston, Tex	53.8	52.0	57.2	56.3	51.2	57.8	62.4	64.7	58.4	68.7	66.3	67.3
Oklahoma City, Okla	36.4	35.0	30.4	39.6	33.5	40.4	50.0	56.2	46.4	59.8	61.7	60.6
Little Rock, Ark	41.4	38.2	41.8	44.9	36.8	44.2	53.0	58.0	48.8	62.1	59.8	62.0
Roswell, N. Mex	39.2	39.0	36.7	42.5	44.8	44.4	51.3	53.9	46.8	60.6	60.4	60.8
Phoenix, Ariz	51.2	52.8	43.2	55.1	56.4	54.7	60.7	64.6	59.9	67.0	73.1	67.6
San Diego, Calif	54.3	56.6	49.2	55.1	56.3	54.4	56.7	57.4	56.6	58.5	58.2	59.7

	May			June			July			August		
	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937
Lynchburg, Va	67.3	68.9	66.4	74.6	73.6	75.9	77.5	79.8	75.8	75.6	77.8	76.4
Charlotte, N. C	68.9	72.6	69.8	75.5	77.4	78.2	78.4	80.9	79.0	77.1	71.0	79.0
Charleston, S. C	72.7	73.0	72.6	78.9	78.8	80.8	81.4	82.9	81.0	81.0	81.6	81.0
Thomasville, Ga	74.0	74.3	75.0	79.5	80.1	80.0	81.8	81.8	80.8	81.0	80.6	80.3
Jacksonville, Fla	75.0	74.6	75.4	79.9	79.0	81.5	82.1	82.4	81.6	81.7	82.1	81.4
Memphis, Tenn	70.6	73.2	72.7	77.6	80.6	79.2	80.7	82.0	79.8	79.4	83.7	82.2
Birmingham, Ala	71.1	74.2	72.5	77.9	81.8	80.4	80.2	80.7	79.7	79.2	80.4	81.0
Meridian, Miss	71.3	72.9	74.4	78.1	81.4	80.3	80.4	81.5	80.6	79.5	80.9	81.6
Shreveport, La	73.6	74.4	76.0	80.7	83.8	82.4	83.2	83.4	83.6	82.0	86.6	84.4
Amarillo, Tex	64.1	67.0	67.4	72.8	77.5	74.4	76.8	80.6	81.0	75.7	81.9	82.1
Galveston, Tex	74.8	75.0	76.2	80.7	83.1	82.9	83.4	82.8	84.0	83.0	84.0	84.2
Oklahoma City, Okla	67.7	71.2	71.2	76.0	80.8	78.8	80.6	86.7	84.4	79.7	88.7	85.8
Little Rock, Ark	70.3	72.2	71.9	77.4	80.6	79.7	80.9	82.6	80.6	79.8	84.9	83.0
Roswell, N. Mex	69.4	68.5	69.2	76.3	78.2	77.0	78.9	78.6	80.0	76.6	78.3	79.8
Phoenix, Ariz	75.0	81.7	78.6	84.5	90.3	85.3	89.8	93.2	91.8	88.5	91.1	92.2
San Diego, Calif	60.8	63.2	62.1	63.9	65.3	64.9	67.2	70.6	68.4	68.7	71.4	68.8

	September			October			November			December			Annual		
	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937
Lynchburg, Va	69.0	71.6	66.3	58.5	60.8	55.3	47.2	46.2	46.0	39.5	40.9	39.2	57.6	57.7	57.3
Charlotte, N. C	71.5	74.4	69.6	61.7	63.8	58.4	50.6	49.6	48.0	43.0	45.1	42.0	60.2	60.4	60.6
Charleston, S. C	76.6	78.8	75.5	67.8	70.4	65.2	58.1	57.2	55.2	51.7	52.2	48.4	66.0	66.2	66.2
Thomasville, Ga	76.8	79.2	75.6	68.2	64.6	67.0	58.5	57.7	56.2	52.5	55.1	51.6	67.1	67.1	67.5
Jacksonville, Fla	78.3	80.4	78.1	71.1	73.2	69.5	62.2	60.6	59.9	56.3	57.2	54.2	69.3	69.3	69.7
Memphis, Tenn	73.6	77.8	72.8	63.3	62.6	60.8	51.7	48.7	49.4	43.6	46.2	42.5	61.6	62.0	61.4
Birmingham, Ala	74.8	78.4	73.3	64.8	66.2	61.4	53.9	51.4	50.2	46.4	49.0	45.6	63.3	64.0	63.5
Meridian, Miss	74.5	79.8	74.7	64.3	66.5	63.1	54.2	52.6	51.6	47.7	50.4	47.8	64.0	65.0	64.8
Shreveport, La	76.9	82.2	77.9	66.6	65.5	66.2	56.0	54.3	53.6	49.1	52.6	50.6	65.8	66.7	66.4
Amarillo, Tex	69.3	69.2	73.1	57.7	56.5	61.8	45.5	46.5	47.6	37.0	42.9	40.0	56.3	58.4	58.4
Galveston, Tex	80.1	81.6	80.6	72.7	70.9	72.5	63.3	59.9	60.0	56.4	56.1	54.8	69.6	69.0	69.7
Oklahoma City, Okla	72.8	76.2	75.0	61.5	58.6	62.1	48.8	47.6	45.9	39.3	44.3	37.7	59.4	61.7	59.9
Little Rock, Ark	74.1	79.4	75.5	63.6	62.2	61.0	52.1	49.6	48.7	44.2	46.1	43.0	62.0	62.5	61.5
Roswell, N. Mex	70.3	69.8	72.8	59.5	57.9	62.1	48.1	45.8	47.8	41.2	42.6	40.5	59.5	59.8	59.8
Phoenix, Ariz	82.7	83.6	86.9	70.6	73.2	74.8	59.7	61.8	62.3	52.0	53.2	56.9	69.7	72.9	71.2
San Diego, Calif	67.1	68.0	69.4	63.7	65.0	64.6	59.7	63.7	60.0	56.0	58.1	60.2	61.0	62.8	61.5

Here are some figures about the weather and about farm production. What do you make of them? Even acting from "hindsight," what would you say should have been done in such and such a year, knowing what we knew then about the weather and crop estimates? What about next

Table 4.—Precipitation: Normal, 1936 and 1937, by monthly averages in inches at specified points

	January			February			March			April		
	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937
Lynchburg, Va	3.43	9.46	8.49	3.15	3.99	2.82	3.54	7.48	1.63	2.95	4.54	5.07
Charlotte, N. C	4.00	10.39	7.74	4.18	5.25	2.77	4.17	7.12	2.13	3.31	9.01	6.13
Charleston, S. C	3.02	2.54	3.91	2.98	3.45	4.68	3.02	5.51	1.84	2.53	2.20	6.55
Thomasville, Ga	4.10	6.47	4.47	4.46	7.18	7.22	4.09	3.15	3.79	3.34	4.99	6.22
Jacksonville, Fla	2.80	1.82	4.52	2.97	5.11	4.05	2.91	2.93	2.49	2.38	1.77	4.01
Memphis, Tenn	4.81	2.19	17.56	4.36	1.82	1.95	5.26	4.12	1.96	4.78	1.21	3.59
Birmingham, Ala	5.52	10.07	13.37	5.06	7.34	4.03	5.70	2.87	3.70	4.81	5.20	6.01
Meridian, Miss	5.32	6.82	18.77	5.45	10.88	6.78	5.23	1.96	2.61	4.78	6.71	2.72
Shreveport, La	3.93	1.77	8.39	3.29	1.40	2.28	4.11	2.65	5.26	4.63	2.18	2.43
Amarillo, Tex	.51	1.02	.29	.71	.25	.18	.71	T	1.10	1.83	.25	.39
Galveston, Tex	3.41	2.75	3.34	2.83	1.42	1.22	2.68	1.89	3.32	3.06	1.93	1.07
Oklahoma City, Okla	1.19	.09	1.21	1.11	.76	.12	1.98	.21	1.15	3.29	.03	2.66
Little Rock, Ark	4.73	.93	18.04	3.84	1.30	2.00	4.62	2.35	2.22	5.19	3.10	1.90
Roswell, N. Mex	.53	.98	.11	.57	.04	.21	.74	.09	1.43	.89	.04	1.25
Phoenix, Ariz	.80	.80	.83	.77	1.01	.76	.68	.50	1.58	.40	.14	T
San Diego, Calif	2.06	.75	1.52	2.03	5.18	4.22	1.72	.92	2.65	.77	.48	.13

	May			June			July			August		
	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937
Lynchburg, Va	3.63	1.23	2.93	3.79	4.64	6.24	4.21	3.07	5.97	3.78	5.95	4.89
Charlotte, N. C	3.63	.01	2.66	4.22	3.20	5.35	5.10	9.18	4.19	5.07	4.30	4.31
Charleston, S. C	3.00	1.79	1.60	4.59	3.08	3.11	6.89	3.42	9.62	6.53	6.37	4.09
Thomasville, Ga	3.63	3.66	2.79	5.45	2.95	6.02	6.70	7.31	5.49	5.75	7.95	5.20
Jacksonville, Fla	4.02	2.38	1.24	5.33	6.15	4.73	6.71	5.88	9.69	5.81	5.99	10.78
Memphis, Tenn	4.19	1.91	4.04	3.55	1.22	4.07	3.18	6.49	4.32	3.36	.40	1.72
Birmingham, Ala	3.95	.65	5.27	4.46	1.81	1.77	5.17	8.52	4.11	4.26	4.00	5.27
Meridian, Miss	4.32	2.48	2.01	4.55	1.71	4.42	4.89	6.22	2.68	4.54	4.60	3.86
Shreveport, La	4.22	2.69	.98	3.50	.39	3.47	3.56	3.27	1.42	2.70	.39	3.02
Amarillo, Tex	2.79	9.02	6.83	2.84	.84	2.83	2.84	.51	1.49	3.08	1.39	.64
Galveston, Tex	3.42	8.90	.10	4.37	.88	1.18	3.71	4.57	2.02	4.28	2.52	3.24
Oklahoma City, Okla	4.88	5.56	1.82	3.67	.23	4.65	2.86	.06	.74	2.89	.17	2.44
Little Rock, Ark	4.78	1.24	2.78	3.76	3.27	1.66	3.50	7.51	1.62	3.75	.27	4.68
Roswell, N. Mex	1.09	2.21	3.88	1.67	.94	.91	2.26	1.42	.94	2.15	.22	.33
Phoenix, Ariz	.12	T	.08	.07	T	T	1.07	2.49	.49	.95	.32	.05
San Diego, Calif	.35	T	.32	.05	.01	.01	.03	.01	.16	.04	.28	0

	September			October			November			December			Annual		
	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937	Normal	1936	1937
Lynchburg, Va	3.31	4.64	2.61	3.15	3.93	7.91	2.33	0.66	2.14	3.26	5.35	1.03	40.53	54.94	51.73
Charlotte, N. C	2.99	5.46	2.31	2.95	6.10	4.70	2.57	1.52	2.37	3.86	5.53	2.79	46.05	67.07	47.45
Charleston, S. C	4.53	2.47	4.34	3.27	5.55	2.68	2.14	.83	4.86	2.72	2.99	1.48	45.22	40.20	48.76
Thomasville, Ga	4.88	5.39	5.56	2.96	5.25	1.50	2.68	.08	3.71	4.31	4.10	1.60	52.35	58.48	53.57
Jacksonville, Fla	7.35	1.61	7.87	4.46	12.62	2.61	1.98	.79	2.57	3.02	1.98	.64	49.74	49.03	55.20
Memphis, Tenn	2.80	6.04	2.50	2.68	3.39	5.49	4.24	3.64	4.18	4.51	6.84	3.92	47.72	39.27	55.30
Birmingham, Ala	3.38	2.70	2.81	2.42	1.64	6.60	3.31	1.62	1.71	5.14	7.78	2.04	53.18	54.20	56.69
Meridian, Miss	2.96	1.17	1.76	2.39	.08	5.18	3.32	2.80	4.25	5.23	6.85	2.98	52.98	52.28	58.02
Shreveport, La	2.80	.84	3.34	2.69	4.09	4.96	3.65	2.34	7.41	4.29	4.43	7.63	43.37	26.44	50.59
Amarillo, Tex	2.30	4.74	2.61	1.66	.82	.31	.92	T	.14	.80	.88	.29	20.99	19.72	17.10
Galveston, Tex	5.57	4.10	6.10	4.36	1.68	2.95	3.33	2.74	2.93	3.75	3.11	4.41	44.77	36.49	31.88
Oklahoma City, Okla	3.05	8.49	2.90	2.86	1.93	2.25	1.87	.06	2.47	1.50	1.31	1.12	31.15	18.90	23.53
Little Rock, Ark	3.17	1.92	5.75	2.71	4.42	5.00	4.19	3.67	3.74	4.14	4.90	3.57	48.38	34.88	52.96
Roswell, N. Mex	2.11	5.15	3.51	1.42	.29	.63	.85	.28	.08	.66	.16	.17	14.94	11.82	13.45
Phoenix, Ariz	.75	.43	1.17	.47	.13	T	.70	.35	0	1.00	2.12	.41	7.78	8.29	5.37
San Diego, Calif	.08	.04	T	.54	1.86	T	.76	.44	.02	1.87	4.45	1.06	10.30	14.42	10.09

year? And if you can figure out what you yourself think you should do, would this plan hold good for every farmer, for all the farmers in the country? Try to work out a farm production schedule for 1939 or 1940, especially in the crops you raise. One of these tables shows the average temperature for each month of 1936 and 1937 and the monthly averages for the past 30 or 40 years for a number of cities down South. Pick out a city near you, and try to figure about what the temperature is going to be next month, next week, and tomorrow. Try the same thing for rainfall from the next table, showing "precipitation"; and try to figure from it whether the coming season will be wet or dry. Then, in the third table, which has some more practical matter in it, note the record regarding the last day of frost in the spring, and figure a planting date for next year which would give you a safe margin. How many days of the year are free from frost in your neighborhood? Is the number of growing days in your neighborhood enough so that a fairly late planting won't run you into an early frost in the fall? Have you ever kept a record of these things on your farm, especially rainfall, temperature, and frost days, and tried to calculate from this record what is likely to happen next season, or next month?

Now look at the problem from the standpoint of the Nation as a whole. We cannot control the weather, and the changing weather from year to year means that production changes from year to year. When crops are large, prices are usually low, so that the farmer's income is not very high; when crops are small, many individual farmers find that they have raised so little that, even with higher prices, their incomes aren't large enough to provide proper living conditions. Why not take this speculative factor out of farming? Why not provide for a reserve supply which will safeguard the American consumer against a bad year; but also provide that, when those supplies get beyond a certain safe point, we take care not to produce so much the next year that these supplies will become a price-breaking surplus? This plan, which the Secretary of Agriculture refers to as the Ever-Normal Granary Plan, seems to be one

way of adjusting ourselves to Old Man Weather. The alternative is to keep on farming largely by speculation. Perhaps you think that should be done, letting farmers see if they can take advantage of the resulting ups and downs. Which shall it be—"letting nature take her course," or trying to level off the peaks and valleys by an "Ever-Normal Granary"?

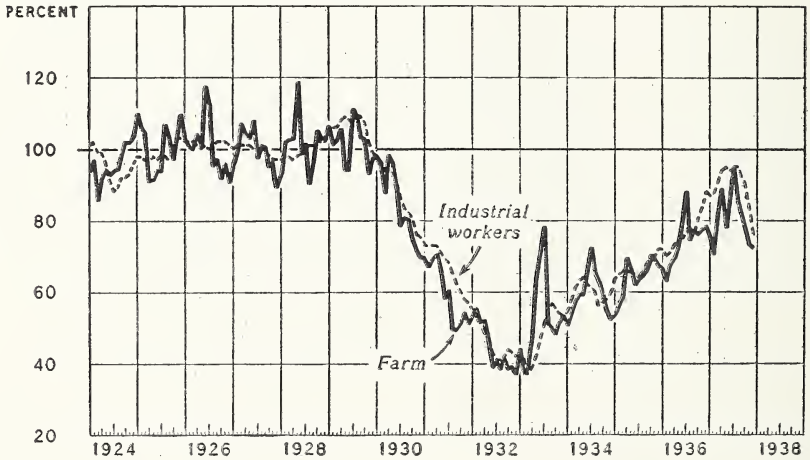
Table 5.—Frost: Dates of killing frosts, 1936 and 1937 and for last 30 to 51 years; and length of growing season, at specified points

	Latest date, killing spring frost—			Earliest date, killing fall frost—			Average number of days in growing season
	1936	1937	Last 30 to 51 years	1936	1937	Last 30 to 51 years	
Lynchburg, Va	Apr. 23	Mar. 28	May 17	Oct. 28	Oct. 15	Oct. 2	201
Charlotte, N. C	Feb. 19	Mar. 17	Apr. 26	Nov. 17	Nov. 5	Oct. 8	225
Charleston, S. C	Feb. 22	Mar. 1	Apr. 2	Nov. 28	Nov. 21	Oct. 28	276
Thomasville, Ga	Feb. 1	Mar. 16	Apr. 26	Nov. 28	Nov. 21	Oct. 25	257
Jacksonville, Fla	Feb. 11	None	Apr. 10	Nov. 28	Nov. 21	Nov. 12	294
Memphis, Tenn	Apr. 3	Mar. 28	Apr. 25	Nov. 5	Oct. 23	Oct. 2	228
Birmingham, Ala	Feb. 22	Mar. 2	Apr. 20	Nov. 16	Oct. 24	Oct. 21	238
Shreveport, La	Feb. 22	Mar. 31	Apr. 9	Nov. 4	Nov. 18	Oct. 20	251
Amarillo, Tex	Apr. 6	Mar. 30	May 23	Nov. 3	Nov. 16	Oct. 16	201
Galveston, Tex	Feb. 18	None	Mar. 19	None	None	Nov. 16	341
Oklahoma City, Okla	Apr. 6	Mar. 31	Apr. 30	Oct. 27	Nov. 16	Oct. 7	218
Little Rock, Ark	Apr. 3	Mar. 28	Apr. 26	Nov. 4	Oct. 23	Oct. 22	241
Roswell, N. Mex	Apr. 7	Apr. 5	May 7	Nov. 3	Nov. 11	Oct. 10	201
Phoenix, Ariz	Jan. 21	Feb. 9	Mar. 31	None	None	Nov. 5	296
San Diego, Calif	None	Jan. 22	Jan. 22	None	None	Dec. 26	

INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE

Everybody is a consumer, especially of food. That means of course, that food products find a tremendous market in the cities. But city people, especially factory, office, and store workers, cannot buy food unless they are employed

Chart III.—Indexes of cash income from farm marketings, and income of industrial workers, United States, 1924–37 (1924–29=100, indexes adjusted for seasonal variation).

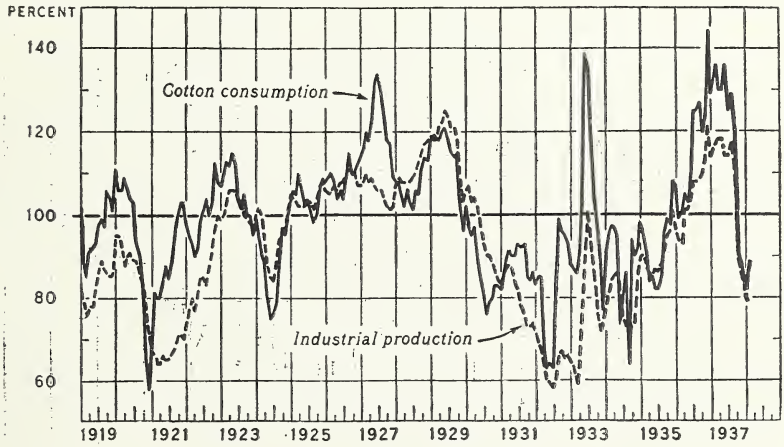


and earn money. And they cannot be employed unless there is work to do; and that means that stores and factories must have more orders for goods. And, since the farmer buys a lot of these things, including clothing and machinery, when he has money, **it seems that the farmer and the city dweller are in the same circle.** Both could well realize that what is good for one is good for the other, and what is bad for one is bad for the other. Charts III and IV show that somehow **the two go up and down together.** But, like the hen and the egg, it may be hard to find out which comes first.

Now there is a big question as to **whether farm prosperity is the basis for general prosperity, or whether**

industrial prosperity is basic. The War between the States was fought partly because of this issue: the agricultural South didn't like the **high tariffs** that raised prices on everything they bought while they were selling in a world market, and the North kept close to Alexander Hamilton's policy of half a century before, encouraging manufacturing by high tariffs. It is a question just how much "protection" an industry needs, especially what it claims to enable it to pay "higher wages to American workingmen." Our automobile companies have no protective

Chart IV.—Indexes of cotton consumption and industrial production in the United States, 1919–37 (1923–25=100).



tariff, and yet they can compete with the world abroad, even after paying freight charges; and they pay the highest wages of any American industry. Until recently, the American farmer could likewise compete with cheap, foreign agricultural labor by selling his wheat and cotton, pork and tobacco abroad, largely because of better land resources and greater production efficiency; and he held practically a complete control of the American market, with a tariff which may or may not have assisted him.

But now the markets for both farm and industrial products have been narrowed down toward the domestic market alone; for foreign countries are trying in every way to be "self-sustaining"; they try to buy as little from

us as possible. And this means that **the farmer and the factory** are going to be confined relatively more to the home market than they have been in the past, that they **are more intensively competing for parts of the same consumer's dollar;** the farmer and the factory worker are again apt to face each other with the old hostility. For high industrial wages mean high cost of clothing and machinery; and high prices for farm products mean high food costs and therefore city wages that are smaller so far as purchasing power is concerned. Not only that, but when industrial activity picks up—in the Carolina cotton mills or in the machine shops of the Connecticut Valley—farm labor becomes scarce, and farm-labor costs go up with prices. Have industry and farming much of a common interest, or are they fundamentally enemies?

Let's get back to chart III on **farm income and industrial activity.** It does seem that they go up and down together. Let's forget about the down part and the bad effects of one on the other. Certainly, the farmer can buy more factory products when his income is up, and the factory worker can pay more for food when he is employed and earning money; even if each spends an increasing share of his rising wages for nonfood products, such as radios or automobiles, the factories that make these things employ more men who can pay more for food, and so on. Now, of course, from a purely selfish view, a manufacturing industry with a high tariff protecting it and with orders ahead, could profit by lower prices on farm products; for its workers could then be paid lower wages because food was cheap, and the factory might be a maker of breakfast foods or a packer of meats or a textile mill, and could profit more by buying its raw materials at low prices. So also a powerful farm lobby might do away with all tariffs and labor laws and thereby take away from industry the power to keep up prices. And it must be admitted that each has in the past thereby gained temporarily over the other when things were going one way or another. But if there is any one thing the farmer should be interested in

today, it is some way of **getting industry out of the slump** so that more men would be employed. And no merchant or manufacturer who has thought this problem through will begrudge the farmer any policy that operates **to increase net farm income. Higher production,** in the city and on the farm, may mean **both higher wages and higher farm incomes,** and the consumers' dollars are then going to multiply so much that neither the farmer nor the manufacturer needs to worry about competing with each other for only a few of those dollars.

It is easy to see the other fellow's point of view. Of course the manufacturer would be interested in low prices for wheat or cotton or hogs or tobacco, and he doesn't like to see a decline in quantity, for much the same reason; neither do the railroads or the commission merchants, who trade in bulk and make their money on handling quantities of things. And the consumer somehow has gotten the idea that he ought to have a lot of things offered him at low prices.

What the farmer needs to do is to set himself patiently and intelligently to the job of educating the city folks to see the farmer's point of view.

What shall be the major policy of American farmers toward industry? Shall they let industry continue to be protected by tariffs and coddled by other governmental aids? Shall agriculture organize its own pressure groups and "let the best man win"? Shall it "fight fire with fire" and demand similar preferred treatment until the whole country gets so sick of privilege that we shall get rid of all of it? Is it possible for both agriculture and industry to share in economic prosperity, and to increase production all around, or will one always benefit at the expense of the other? Is there a common ground or a basis for compromise? Should agriculture give up its policy of crop adjustment or production control, believing that if it does industry will get started again? Should industry make the first move? Can it? What shall we do?

COORDINATION OF FARM MANAGEMENT, COUNTY PLANNING, AND NATIONAL FARM POLICIES

A farm is—but **what is a farm?** Is an acre of land, supporting a galvanized-iron shed, in which lives a bachelor who hasn't and perhaps couldn't raise a family, but who "manages to get along," a farm? When is a farm a farm? And when isn't it? Is an abandoned farm a farm? Is a farm a farm if it cannot support a family? How big should a farm be? It if isn't large enough to be a successful farm-management unit, should our agricultural policies be so formulated as to take care of it? Is a farm an economic unit, or is it a social unit whose main purpose is to raise future good citizens? Certainly we ought to know what we mean by a "farm" before we begin to think and talk about farm policies or farm management. Perhaps you have some questions to add to those that have been raised; and perhaps you have some answers to them. Try to define "a farm" so that we can use the word whenever we want to talk about farm policies.

Look back over our agricultural history during the past century or two. We swept over the country in vast westward-moving waves, **homesteading and settling,** abandoning the older, worn-out farms in the East, ever looking for new land. Now that movement has come to an end, as far as the United States is concerned. More recently our agricultural colleges and departments have been leading farmers to practice **more efficient farming methods.** Farm management for a while meant increased production, "making two blades of grass grow where one grew before." For a while this was all well and good. But then we began to produce more than could be sold; our foreign markets failed us, and our industrial system broke down, so that people couldn't buy the goods which were piling up in warehouses and on merchants' shelves. Then

farm management began to put more stress on **economics.** Farmers began to learn that "bumper" crops sometimes brought lower farm incomes than did lighter yields; that sales of farm products below a certain level, of quantity or of price, didn't bring in enough income to pay rent, interest, taxes, and other fixed costs. Farmers began to learn that **net income** was the important thing, and not merely gross income or high prices or high yields; that prices must not get too high, or the market would be lost, and that production must not be expanded too much, or the price level would fall disastrously. This is a lot of economics to learn, but one of the most hopeful signs in recent years has been that farmers have been learning these things very rapidly and well.

And then we began to find out that **our soil was being used up too fast,** especially by renters or farm speculators who held the land for only a short time and who tried to get as much production out of it as possible for the short time while they held it. And we began to find out that a farmer who might "make a go of it" on 80 acres in the richer lands and moisture climates of the East or Middle West, couldn't produce enough to support a family on 640 acres in some parts of the Great Plains region. And the growth of farm-tenantry, and in some places of the corporation farm, raised the question whether we ought to encourage **farm ownership as a public policy;** and that led to the question of **how large a farm should be** in order to keep it a family unit, with enough income to maintain decent living standards. From all of this knowledge and experience, we turned to the question, **What should a farm be?**

To begin with, we may as well admit that there are **too many small farms,** especially in some regions. Farm families make a living from them, yes; but what a living! But if we should move these families off their farms, and combine these farms into economic units, what would we do with all these people? There would be a surplus for whom there were no farms. In former times, our surplus farm population—whole families or some of the young

folks—moved westward or to the cities; but there are no more large areas of land available for settlement, and just now there are no jobs open in the cities. Our expanding population, of course, meant an expanding market for food and fiber, and people do buy more food and clothing when their incomes rise; but these factors are not at work now. Farm food products supply what we call an **"inexpansible" market**; that is, people eat just about so much food, and the rising incomes of consumers do not mean similar increases in food purchases. **Industry, however, has an expansible market**; there is no end to the amount of some manufactured articles which people will buy if their incomes increase. So that the **probable kind of future expansion of production is largely industrial; and the normal migration of people may be expected to be from the farm to the city.** This is all the more reason why farm people should be interested in promoting every means of stimulating industrial production. For the more we stimulate industrial production in our cities, the more can industry absorb some of our surplus farm population; and the more we develop the domestic and foreign markets for our farm products, the more people can live in our farming areas.

But merely wishing or waiting for these things will not solve the farm problem or help the individual farmer. What he needs is some help right now in "making a go" of his farm. Of course, **there are some farmers who wish that people would let them alone to run their own farms,** and they probably can do a pretty good job of it. What they do not realize is that every man who does a bad job of farming hurts the good farmer; for then a lot of low-grade farm products floods the market and does nobody much good. So let's leave this good farmer alone for a while, and **let's talk about the farmer who is having a hard time of it.** He probably has too small a farm, to begin with; and what he has probably calls for too high an interest or rent charge, considering the productivity of the land. As a result, he probably is "mining" the land for all he can get out of it and is not keeping up, let alone

building up, its fertility. If he considers leaving the farm, he probably doesn't know where else he might go, or what he would do if he got there. A lot of people think that he probably had better stay where he is, at least for the time being, and get along as well as he can. And now the Federal Government comes along and proposes to pay this farmer for adjusting his production in line with sound farm practices for the Nation.

Some people object to having the Government pay a farmer for doing what he ought to do anyway; but many a farmer has to till every possible acre, and keep a high proportion of his land in soil-depleting crops, in order to make a bare living for his family. Should such a farmer receive Government payments to improve his farm? A great many farmers would be willing to divert some acreage from soil-depleting to soil-building crops, if they knew that everybody else would join with them—for, say what you will, this shift does involve a sacrifice in immediate money income. And many of these farmers could adopt sound farm-management practices if they received some financial help from the Government.

So there we are, face to face with the problem of finding some way of adjusting production to demand, and of adjusting crop acreage so as to conserve the soil. And that does mean restriction of production of certain crops as a rule. And that, in turn, arouses the hostility of a great number of people.

Let's hear what they have to say and let's let them get their ideas before us. To begin with, they say, such a program is **contrary to the Bible.** Of course, some of these people would be hard put to it to find just where the Bible says anything about the matter, and most of them would be surprised when they found out just what was referred to. But let's agree that a program of crop restriction does "go against the grain" of a lot of sincere folks, including some farmers; and on this point, it perhaps would be best to argue little, because feelings run pretty deep. Some people seem to think that **the farmer ought to produce as much as he possibly can,** so that

food and raw materials can be bought as cheaply as possible. Some of these people are selfishly interested, especially the processors and consumers, and perhaps we would do well not to argue too much on that point. It is sound economics **in the long run** for a producer to lower prices gradually so as to encourage consumers to buy more of his goods; for if he is a good manager, he can reduce his unit costs and increase his net returns. Such a policy may not fit crises such as we have just had in agriculture, but some people cannot see this.

But some of these folks, even if they are opposed to crop reductions, become quite interested in the fact that a policy of maximum farm production very definitely means **destroying our soil,** unless we take far more care than we have in the past to maintain that soil fertility. And when they see that probably we ought to pay more attention than we do to **improving our distribution system**—to prevent the piling up of unsold goods while a lot of people are in need of food and clothing and shelter—they begin to realize that **blind production is not the solution to our problem.** Some people think that our farming areas ought to absorb all the unemployed people of the cities, and even that hard times ought to fall most heavily on farm folks by making them produce a lot for low prices and lowered standards of living; but one would perhaps be wise not to argue with such folks.

There is, however, a line of thinking opposed to crop restriction, which deserves serious attention. People who follow this line of thinking say, and with much sound basis, that a **restriction of farm production is a dangerous thing.** To begin with, **it raises prices;** and that means that **less can be sold,** for the consumer's pocketbook has a limit, and he will prefer to spend more of his money for other things. They point out that **relatively high prices will ruin our foreign market and that it will eventually encourage increased farm production both at home and abroad,** and that it has in fact done so. And they will also point out that a smaller volume of farm products means a **smaller amount of freight**

for the railroads and the steamships, for way stations and docks and trucks, for manufacturing plants and stores; and that all of this means fewer jobs and therefore lower consumer purchases. **This is a serious point. But it can also be raised against factories which shut down.** And why should the farmer alone try to get this economic machine off dead center, any more than the business man or the manufacturer? What the farmer needs to take to heart, in this matter, is the danger of any restriction program which goes so far as to raise prices beyond reason. He will "cook his goose" in that way. But "what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," and the point needs to be learned just as well by the manufacturer and the distributor. **In the long run, the farmer ought to keep in mind a big market for his goods;** and that would mean gradually increasing production in the long run at gradually decreasing prices, **with increasing farm efficiency lowering his unit costs** so that his net farm income will rise. This is the constructive side of the sound objection to a policy of restricting production.

But all of this sound economic theory will do little good in the face of a **sharp crisis** such as we have had lately. When the bottom drops out of prices, and stocks of goods pile up, and men lose their jobs and cannot buy things at any price, what good does it do to talk about gradually decreasing prices and increasing production efficiency? What is wanted is something to put a **floor under falling prices** and to **curb the excessive production which is making matters worse.** For a farmer, facing falling prices for his products, may even increase his production in order to increase his income. And that means **"taking it out of" the land.** By restricting the production of such crops as are already glutting the market, and which for the most part deplete the soil, the farmer is doing what every intelligent professor of farm management has been teaching for years; especially if he treats the land taken out of production so as to build up its fertility. And if our

warehouses are already full of goods, **there is no better form of providing additional storage space than to build up the fertility of the land** for future increased productivity when we shall need it.

But **an individual farmer cannot do this sort of thing alone.** He not only needs to keep in touch with his neighbors, to learn from their experience; but the job has to be organized among the farmers of a community, a township, a county. Is your county engaged in program planning? Do you see that this work is an attempt to do, on a county-wide scale, what good farm management would call for on your own farm? What is the purpose of your county program planning? Are you trying through it to find the best uses to which the land of your county can be put? This may mean that some farms have to have more soil-conserving acres than others. How does the land-use program of your county, or even of your farm, fit in with the problem of keeping our national production of cotton or corn within the bounds of what can be used or sold at a price which the farmer needs? How does your county land-use program affect the net farm income of your county? of your farm?

The farmer should think of the welfare of his own family and his own farm. But the farmer, to do this job well, will have to think about national policies and international problems more than he has ever done before.

Many more things could be said. But now we'll discuss some of the more particular problems of **the cotton farmer** and the agricultural program concerned with cotton. But we need to take a breathing spell at this point—in fact, it would have been well at the end of each section to lay this pamphlet aside for a while and think about that part of the problem; or, if this pamphlet is being used by a discussion group, to talk about one point before going on with the next. For the value of this pamphlet is going to consist in the amount of thinking and discussion which it stirs up.

WHAT ABOUT COTTON?

We can say a lot of things about cotton—and many people even get quite sentimental about the plant, the squares and bolls, the "darkies" picking it, and the old stern-wheelers loaded with bales "to the gunnels" and puffing their way down the rivers. Few thrills compare with that of seeing a field in blossom, white in the morning and purple or pink at evening—unless it be the cloudy gray of a field of bursting bolls, at "cotton-pickin'" time, with pickers weaving and singing their way down the rows and dragging their long white sacks on the ground behind them. And then there are the busy sucking gins, with lines of waiting wagons of fluffy fiber, each load topped by a cluster of "pickaninnies", and with sociable chatter all about the place. Even the city folks get a thrill as they watch "roustabouts" "rastle" the bales about the wharves and onto waiting ships, ready to take this "king" commodity to all ports of the world. Yes, **it's a romantic plant,** COTTON!

Unfortunately, we cannot spend much time dreaming about the romantic side of cotton. For there's a much more sober side to the matter. Those "wagons of unginned lint topped with pickaninnies" may appear in story books, but nowadays the cotton is being brought in in unromantic trucks. There's the **big planter's worry** about the price and whether he can hold off the bank loan another year, and keep the "big house" going. **There's a little cabin** to think about, too, with cotton planted on the 3 acres around it and with the rows running right up to the sagging porch and the kitchen door. But too much sentimental attention has been given to "the big plantation" and "the little cabin"; **most of the farms in the South are 2-plow, or 2-team farms,** with 40 or 50 acres to the farm. That's

where the real problem of cotton farming centers. If we take the census returns, farms in the cotton areas run a little over 70 acres except for Texas and Oklahoma; with a State like Georgia running a bit higher, and a State like Mississippi running somewhat lower. But, taking these two States and North Carolina, two-thirds of the farms run from 20 to 175 acres, with the number fairly equally divided among three groups; from 20 to 50 acres, from 50 to 100 acres, and from 100 to 175 acres. But the acreage in cropland per family is far less than these figures would show. Cropland in Texas or Oklahoma may average some 70 acres per family. But in Georgia, it averages only around 35 acres; in Mississippi, around 25 acres; and in North Carolina, only about 20 acres. Now, it is obvious, that these are largely one-man farms, or farms tilled by the owner and one tenant. And we need not only to get away from "plantation" and "cabin" sentiments in thinking about this problem; but we need also to remember that when we get down to farms of less than 50 acres, or even 80 acres, the problem of setting aside some of that land exclusively for soil-conservation purposes is a difficult one. Every acre needs to be tilled to produce enough for one or two families to live on.

If the weather's fine, and the price is good—often these two things don't go together—the family of five or seven may have as much as $450 or $600 to live on next year. But sometimes the weather's not so fine, and the crop's not so good, and there's less than $450 or $600 coming in for the year's work. And then sometimes, even if the weather's all right, strange things happen to the price—often it drops faster than the crop grows, and it wiggles and waggles about so that a fellow is glad to get 8 or 9 cents a pound. Better take what you can get, for expenses are just as sure as taxes and death! **But what makes that price bobble around so?** And why does it generally seem to have as permanent a sag as most of those cabin roofs? That's what seems to cause most of the trouble.

THE FOREIGN MARKET

Let's forget for awhile about cotton as a plant or as a baled fiber as it leaves the gin, and just think about what becomes of it—not the dresses and shirts and tires and auto tops and sails, but just **when it gets onto the market** where the manufacturers begin to pick it up. And let's notice that that happens largely in a foreign market, for we cannot use in this country all the cotton that we ourselves grow; **more than half of it is sold abroad.** And that means, of course, that it sells on a **"world market"** and for a **"world price,"** both of which are as much beyond our control as is the weather. Let's not fight this idea; it wouldn't help anyway, because it's a brute fact. Let's just face the fact honestly and frankly. In general, if people all over the world want more cotton, up will go the price; and again, in general, if less cotton is produced all over the world and less pours into the market, up will go the price. And the opposites can happen, too; and when they do, down goes the price. But, for the most part, that price swings up and down as the various forces play on it; much as the center point of a rope moves one way or another in a tug-of-war, as one side or the other shows its greater power. Cheering or boos on the sidelines may help some, but not much; and the individual, on the sidelines or even in the field, is almost helpless. The best we can do is to keep a hand on the rope!

But why can't we do something about it, if we all pull together; even in a world market, especially when we raise so much cotton? In the first place, are foreign and domestic markets equally sensitive to price changes, equally "elastic"? Let's take a look at the situation. The world price is, say, 9 cents a pound. Suppose we put a tariff on raw cotton, say of 9 cents a pound, so

that none can come in from abroad. Now suppose the world price drops to 8 cents; will the price at home stay at 9 cents? If it does for even a little while, and if home production supports this price situation, every cotton merchant in the country will be after that 9 cents, and down will go the price until it hits the world-price level. Of course, if we raised less than we can consume, there would be a different story; just as there is a different story for manufactured goods that we make, and which people are ready to buy more of than they can get. But every product of which we have a surplus—cotton, hogs, wheat, tobacco, yes, and automobiles—and which we sell abroad, gets practically no help from a "protective" tariff. **The best they can get is the world price at home as well as abroad,** unless there is a program of restricting production to less than the amount of home consumption. Suppose that things improve abroad, and prices go up—suppose that cotton goes up to 15 cents. Then every cotton merchant will go after that 15 cents, and every American purchaser will have to put up 15 cents for every pound of cotton he wants to keep here—and all this, whether the tariff is 9 cents or $1 or 1 cent a pound!

But **what if our supply of cotton changes?** Will the world price change as much as does our own supply of cotton? Of course not. We raise a lot of cotton, but so do other countries. If we raise half the cotton in the world and then double our supply, the world price will not necessarily be cut in two, especially if other countries grow no more or grow less than usual. But there's the other side of the story—and this is the hard part. Suppose we raise just half our usual supply; then what? Well, if other countries raise their usual amount, the total world supply will be cut, not to one-half but to three-fourths—the foreign half plus one-half of our half. And the price will probably rise, but it probably will not be doubled. So there we'd be with only one-half a crop, but not double the price, and our total cotton income would go down. And that's not the worst of it. For **the higher price might discourage our foreign market and might**

encourage foreigners or American farmers to raise more cotton; then the world price would go down, and we might not get even the little increase in price which our share of reduction was intended to bring about. And, once those foreign countries or new areas in this country began to raise cotton, they might get into the habit of doing so—just as we have—and then, when the price began to drop again, they might raise even more cotton so as to increase their cotton income. High prices have a dangerous tendency to freeze the market and to encourage production, both at home and abroad.

We might try just the opposite. **We might try to raise more cotton,** realizing all the time that the world price would therefore drop. But since we raise only half the cotton of the world, we could double our own crop and yet only increase the world supply by one-half—the world half and our half and another half we get by doubling our crop. This would lower the price, but not necessarily by a half; and our income from the doubled crop might be greater than from a normal crop. The lower price might discourage foreign cotton growers, and that would mean a lower foreign supply; and that would mean that **the price might not fall so low as we expected.** But, of course, at home, we would have to get the larger income by doubling our work and our land area or our fertilizer; and **that would mean less profit per pound of cotton. But, if we watched our costs, perhaps we could cut them down and increase our net income.** And then there's another angle: **people might buy more** auto tops and sails and shirts and dresses, because prices would be lower. And the bigger supplies of cotton would mean more freight handling, more stevedores, more truck drivers; and these folks would be earning more money and buying more cotton goods. At least, that's the theory of the thing.

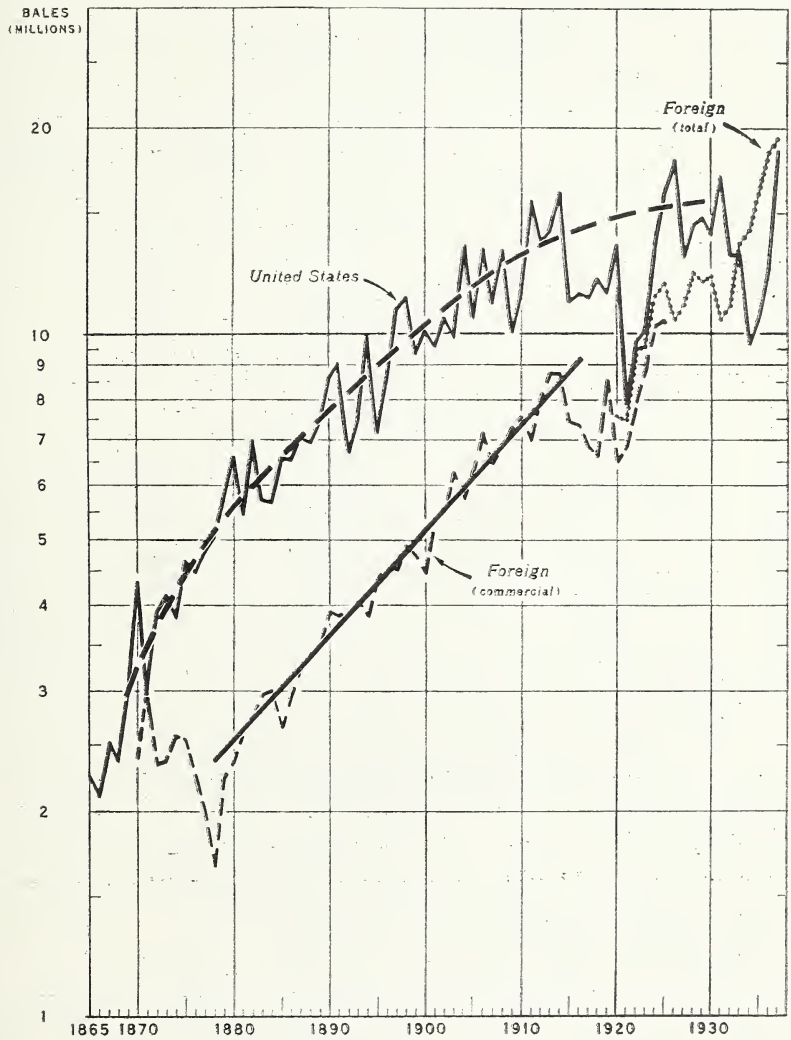
But there are some awfully hard facts on which this theory can stub its toes. **Suppose we raise a lot of cotton, so much that the world cannot use or buy it all.** Down goes the price. **The cotton piles up** in the warehouses, on the plantation, in the factories, on the mer-

chant's shelves. Whether we raise too much, or people are out of work and cannot buy much, the effect is the same. But the further trouble is that **the price doesn't stop at the place where we figure it would stop;** it keeps on tumbling, until it reaches, let's say, 5 cents. **Those surpluses,** whether people see them or merely read the figures in the papers, have an effect on price away out of proportion to their size. And we can't check the falling of the price by controlling the weather or by raising the tariff; and we can check it only partly by raising less cotton. **But 5 cents a pound may mean less than $500 a year for that 40-acre farm.** Not much to raise a family on, even if there's no mortgage on the place. With a mortgage or rent, and with taxes to pay, that $500 begins to grow even smaller, when you have some interest payments due the banks, and cash-wage payments to meet. And with such a program of increased production of cotton, what about the production of food and feed for home consumption? Those are the hard facts that make the theorists look like dreamers.

But up comes another group of theorists. **Let's raise only as much cotton, they say, as we ourselves consume at home!** Then we can make a tariff actually begin to work. That would mean, of course, raising only one-half the usual amount of cotton on each farm. And that would simply give away the foreign market for cotton to other countries. It would mean farming the other half of the land of each farm so as to grow something else. Not so bad at that, say our theorists, especially if it means growing more food for home consumption and if it means growing more crops that help the soil. **These theorists don't realize how hard it is for a farmer to change his ways.** What about learning how to raise a new kind of crop, and how about the money for new types of farm machinery? Cotton or tobacco land isn't necessarily good corn land. And how about finding **new outlets for the new farm products**—maybe no one in town wants to, or knows how to, handle such goods. It may take the

farmer himself a long time to get into the swing of efficient production of a different kind of crop. Can the southern planter, who has learned for generations how to grow

Chart V.—Cotton production in the United States and in foreign countries, 1865–1937.



cotton, suddenly turn to dairying or hog-raising and "have a show" against the experienced farmer from New England, New York, Wisconsin, or Iowa? Better keep to cotton, and understand this foreign-market situation better.

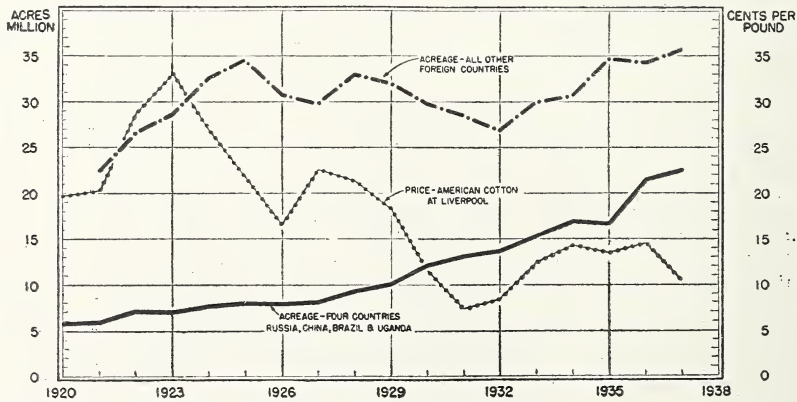
Here are some tables and charts to show what's been happening in the past. Notice how our **percentage** of the world production of cotton has been going down, even though the amount has increased somewhat. Prior to 1920, we raised over 60 percent of the world supply; from

Table 6.—World production of cotton, by 5-year annual averages and by annual amounts

	World production	United States production	Percentage United States to world
	Millions of bales	*Millions of bales*	
5-YEAR ANNUAL AVERAGES			
1901–05	16. 4	10. 8	66
1906–10	18. 7	11. 8	63
1911–15	22. 2	14. 2	64
1916–20	19. 1	11. 9	62
1921–25	21. 7	11. 5	53
1926–30	26. 8	14. 8	55
ANNUAL AMOUNTS			
1929	26. 9	14. 8	55
1930	26. 2	13. 9	53
1931	27. 8	17. 1	62
1932	24. 3	13. 0	53
1933	26. 9	13. 0	44
1934	23. 8	9. 6	40
1935	26. 7	10. 6	40
1936	30. 8	12. 4	40
1937	38. 3	18. 2	47

Sources: Agricultural Statistics, 1937, U. S. Department of Agriculture; The Agricultural Situation, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Chart VI.—Cotton acreage in foreign countries and world price of American cotton, 1920–37.



1934 to 1936, we raised only 40 percent, and in 1937 we still raised less commercial cotton than the rest of the world. We still raise more cotton than we can consume at home, so we're still on a world-market and world-price basis. But as our percentage goes down, down goes any influence we might have on world supplies by increasing or decreasing our production. Note chart VI showing foreign acreage and world price. Is there any connection there? Has the price influenced acreage? Has the acreage influenced price? Watch the figures for stocks on hand; they affect the price, as well as does production. What do you think we ought to do next year? In 1940?

Table 7.—Imports of cotton by principal cotton-importing countries

[Year beginning July 1; millions of bales]

	5-year average 1925–30	1932–33	1933–34	1934–35	1935–36
United Kingdom	3.1	2.5	3.0	2.2	2.9
Japan	3.1	3.1	3.6	3.7	3.7
Germany	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.2	1.4
France	1.6	1.4	1.5	.9	1.4
Italy	1.1	.9	1.0	.7	--------
China	.6	1.0	.6	.5	.3
Czechoslovakia	.6	.3	.3	.3	.4
Belgium	.4	.4	.4	.4	.5
All others	.9	.9	1.2	1.2	1.3
Totals	13.5	12.3	13.5	11.1	11.9

Table 8.—Exports of cotton by principal cotton-exporting countries

[Year beginning July 1; millions of bales]

	5-year average 1925–30	1932–33	1933–34	1934–35	1935–36
United States	8.6	8.6	8.4	5.1	6.4
British India	2.9	2.1	2.6	2.7	3.0
Egypt	1.5	1.3	1.9	1.7	1.7
Brazil	.1	0	.2	.7	.7
Argentina	.1	.1	.1	.1	.2
Totals	13.2	12.2	13.2	10.3	11.9

Source: Agricultural Statistics, 1937, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Table 9.—United States cotton production, farm value, stocks on hand, and ratio of exports to production, by 5-year annual averages and annual amounts

	United States production	Farm value of lint	Average value per bale	U. S. carry-over from previous year	Percentage exports are of production
	Millions of bales	*Millions of dollars*	*Dollars*	*Millions of bales*	*Percent*
5-YEAR ANNUAL AVERAGE					
1901–05	10. 8	486	45	--------	67. 1
1906–10	11. 8	659	56	--------	67. 7
1911–15	14. 2	729	51	--------	62. 8
1916–20	11. 9	1, 470	124	3. 5	47. 7
1921–25	11. 5	1, 277	111	3. 4	58. 7
1926–30	14. 8	1, 127	76	2. 8	56. 4
ANNUAL AMOUNTS					
1929	14. 8	1, 245	84	2. 5	44. 5
1930	13. 9	659	47	2. 3	50. 9
1931	17. 1	484	28	4. 5	53. 1
1932	13. 0	424	40	6. 4	67. 4
1933	13. 0	664	51	9. 7	59. 9
1934	9. 6	596	62	8. 2	51. 1
1935	10. 6	590	56	7. 7	57. 3
1936	12. 4	760	61	7. 2	43. 5
1937	18. 2	734	40	5. 4	--------

Source: Agricultural Statistics, 1937, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Things to note in table 9:

1. Notice that the percentage of our cotton crop which we exported in 1932 was high, when the price per bale was low, $40; but that the previous year, when the price per bale was still lower, and our crop was larger, we did not export so large a percentage.

2. Notice that the 1931 crop of 17 million bales was the largest crop since 1929, except 1937; but that its total farm value was not much greater than the total farm value of our 1932 crop of only 13 million bales, and that it was less than the total farm value of any other crop since 1929; and that the farm value of our 1935 crop of 10,600,000 bales, was less than the farm value of our smaller 1934 crop of 9,600,000 bales.

3. Do not be misled by looking back with longing to the higher values of the 1916–20 period, for this included the war years and the post-war period; but if you study these figures carefully, you may have some observations of your own to make on the relations between production, total farm value, price per bale, stocks on hand, and percentage of production which went into export.

PRICE POLICIES AND NEW USES FOR COTTON

At least two important ways to **expand the market** for cotton are open to us. One of these ways is to **lower the price,** which assumes of course that the market for cotton is expansible. Another way to expand the market is to develop **new uses,** in the direction of making cotton products more attractive, or making them better fitted for certain purposes than other products, or perhaps even finding some completely new use which no raw material has ever served before. Let's discuss these new uses first, and then talk about prices. But let's not forget that **the two do go together.** For a lower price not only generally encourages a greater use of well-known cotton products but it also makes a lot of people get busy to see if they can make something new out of the cheaper material. On the other hand, every producer of cotton could well show some interest in developing new uses for cotton so that the market will absorb more of what is and can be produced. **New uses for cotton may result in keeping the price firm or in raising it,** even if production is increased.

We have seen some of these new uses for cotton within recent years. Fabrics for automobiles have enabled cotton to enjoy a part of the earnings of this remarkable new industry. We have to be careful on this point, however. Some people seem to think that style-shows which encourage people to wear more cotton clothes will make a larger market for cotton, but such "fine-goods" sales are not so important for the raw-cotton market as are the heavier industrial uses. And most of the gains from expanding the market for manufactured cotton goods are likely to be the gains of labor or of management or capital; but that again may mean a bigger demand for overalls, shirts, and dresses. Some explosives are made of cotton; and some

cotton men might be inclined to start a war, so as to have more cotton consumed in that way. They ought to remember that a part of the trouble cotton is now in is the result of the last war. Then there is this difficulty—new tire fabrics made out of cotton products are being used instead of cotton fiber itself. The new use for cotton may produce better or cheaper tires, but it probably doesn't consume very much more raw cotton. One big use for cotton recently developed has been that of laying a heavy cotton fabric on a roadbed before paving over it; **that kind of "new use," which increases the net consumption of cotton, is something to keep in mind.** Similarly, in Utah, they are lining irrigation ditches with a cotton fabric to reduce leaks and seepage.

All these new uses for cotton are "great stuff" for raw cotton, and the engineers and research workers in laboratories deserve a great deal of credit for what they are doing. **But the hopes of cotton farmers ought not to be raised too high by such promises,** and people should not be led to expect miracles along such lines. Sometimes the new product or the new use is attractive, but only for a few people, not enough to require many pounds of cotton. Sometimes the new cotton product merely replaces other ways of using cotton, as in the case of tires. And, of course, "what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander"—**the same scientists may discover new uses for wood fiber, which may replace cotton.** It has already done so in the case of paper products. But here, again, we see how widely the new-use problem extends, for it may be that the new uses for Southern pine may encourage some cotton farmers to divert acreage to trees. But we must keep in mind the fact that most of the new-use announcements that reach the headlines of the newspapers take care of a few tens of thousands or a few hundreds of thousands of bales of cotton; our problem is to find use for some six to ten million bales.

It may be that some big event will turn the tide. For example, several centuries ago, when men-at-war quit wearing armor, they needed heavier fiber clothes, and

wool came into wide use. A knight could not very well wear wool under a suit of armor; but modern armies need heavy wool clothing. So, also, when people quit wearing "flannel" underwear, and in the interests of comfort and health turned to "B. V. D.'s" and other cotton fabrics, new cotton uses were developed. And cotton has been the biggest invader of the fields of other fabrics—silks, woolens, linens, etc.—as well as going into new uses: cotton bagging and other packages for sugar, fruits and vegetables, flour and cement, and fabric for curing concrete. But now along comes rayon, a competitor of cotton as well as of silk. And the Italians are developing "lanital," a clothing fabric made from milk. Paper, as we said, has come to be a real competitor of cotton; so has jute. Back and forth the struggle goes; with cotton pretty well holding its own, but only if its manufacturers keep on the alert. **New uses are one way out.** But they may also be found for other materials which may then compete with cotton.

What can a small-unit cotton farmer do about developing new uses for cotton? Or even a big-plantation owner, for that matter? Such things may have to be left to the manufacturer or the laboratory worker; and the problem is not merely a technical one of production, but also one of price and marketing. But every man who makes his living by growing or handling or working cotton should be interested in developing new uses for it. **And there is one way he can help; he can join a cotton-growers' association, and he can try to get that organization to help finance research to widen cotton markets,** to help pay for a laboratory or an adding machine, or the salary of a chemist or a statistician who will find new uses or new markets for cotton, or at least learn the facts about it.

Can you think of some new uses for cotton? Does your cotton-growers' association donate any money for discovering new uses or markets? Should it? If we really mean business in this matter of developing new markets for cotton, which do you think needs the greater attention—

finding new uses for cotton, or working on policies that will make prices more attractive to buyers?

Now let's talk about **the price situation.** To begin with, there is one thing we can do about the price of anything, and that is, to **let it alone**—let Government keep its hands off, and just "let prices seek their own levels". This really means, of course, that the only people who would determine the price would be the actual, individual, buyers and sellers. This is what people mean by "the law of supply and demand," and we have already discussed this in another connection. If people want more of a commodity, and begin to buy it, up will go the price; if people get too anxious to sell what they have, down will go the price. If people quit buying, down goes the price; if people hold back from selling what they have, up goes the price. In the case of cotton, if we "let nature take its course," a big supply of cotton will mean a lower price; but a lower price may encourage more buying, and that will bring the price up again. And a lower price may discourage producers from raising so much cotton, and a lower production may then result in higher prices.

Of course, we run into difficulties in this reasoning. It isn't only current production, but stocks on hand—surpluses—that also affect the price. And when the price goes down, an individual producer may feel like producing a larger quantity so as to maintain his gross income; for he may have a lot of fixed costs or out-of-pocket expenses to meet, no matter how much or how little he raises. And if a lot of people are in the same fix, production and surpluses may increase in spite of lower prices. And this is especially the case in a highly competitive and small-unit business such as cotton growing. The individual is helpless when he tries to meet a world-wide market and price situation such as is the case with cotton. At least it does seem that something ought to be done about keeping that price from falling so low as to endanger the ownership of the farm and the living standards of the family. What do you think of the "let alone" policy? Shall we engage in unbridled competition with the rest of the cotton-pro-

ducing countries for a share in the world market? Even if we sell more cotton that way, can we "make a go" of cotton farming at the price we then would get?

We could go to the other extreme and **raise prices by a limitation of sales and a drastic restriction of cotton production.** What about reducing supplies to a point where the price would be boosted to a high level, such as "parity," which now would be around 16 cents per pound? Such a policy might have worked fairly well years ago, when American cotton dominated the world market, and when foreign cottons were poor substitutes for the American product. But is that the case now? If we did succeed for a few years in raising the price of cotton to a high level, would this keep up indefinitely? What would the consumer do? And what would the producers do, abroad as well as at home? Would we keep even the part of the foreign market that we now have? Can we be self-sufficient as a nation, so far as cotton is concerned?

A third policy we need to consider is known as **the "two-price" policy.** The idea of this policy is to sell cotton in the domestic market at a level which is above the world price, and then to export the rest and sell it at the world price. This general scheme is also known as **the "domestic-allotment" plan.** This plan can be worked out with many variations. With respect to production, we could determine the amount which could be sold in the domestic market and allocate this among all cotton farms; and then we could either let cotton farmers raise as much as they wish for the export trade at whatever price they could get, or we could even limit the amount which would be raised for export. We could, by this plan, in one way avoid limiting our sales abroad, and we would therefore avoid freezing our foreign market or encouraging foreign producers. This plan recognizes that selling our cotton abroad is largely a price problem, where we may as well face the fact that cotton, like other things, is worth "what it will fetch." And it takes the view that the domestic market is a somewhat different matter. We've all learned that the American standard

of living is higher than elsewhere, and this means in part that people in this country can afford to pay more for things than foreigners can or do pay. Of course, this means that our domestic market depends largely on having plenty of people employed and on their receiving relatively high wages. So that, even in the domestic market, we should have to be careful not to set that price so high as to endanger the sale of half our cotton. As for the cotton grower, this plan in general puts up to him whether he wants to increase his acreage and production beyond a certain point, knowing that he would probably get less for that extra amount. What do you think of this domestic-allotment plan for cotton production?

Now, the question arises, **what devices are to be used for raising the price of domestically consumed cotton above the world price?** Several proposals have been made. (1) Suppose we give cotton farmers **certificates** on that part of their crop destined for domestic consumption, and require that processors selling cotton in the home market match their sales with certificates purchased from farmers? Farmers would thus get the world price for their entire crop, plus the value of the certificates on the domestically consumed portion of their crop. (2) We could place a **processing tax** on the domestically consumed cotton, and then return the tax to the cotton farmer in the form of benefit payments. (3) We could grant **loans** to the farmer on the domestically consumed portion of his crop, setting the loan figure somewhere above the world price so as to insure him against loss on that part of his cotton. What do you think of these plans? Do they involve too much regimentation? Are they necessary? Will they work?

Even such a plan, of course, would have to take care that **the loan, or price,** on the amount of cotton raised for the domestic market, **would not be so high as to discourage the home market.** Like all markets, the home market is sensitive to price changes. Even the consumers in a high-standard-of-living country, such as the United States, might react so unfavorably to certain prices—even guaranteed "cost-of-production" prices—as to freeze the

market for cotton. Hence, we come back again to the question: **just how big should that loan figure be?** Can it safely be higher on cotton produced for domestic use, in a two-price system, than it could be on a one-price system where we loaned the same amount on all cotton produced? Can we get at this problem better by such a direct approach, than we can by an indirect approach of adjusting cotton acreage? Could we get at the problem better by allotting farmers a cotton acreage which will supply the home market—which is fairly stable—and then leave to each farmer the matter of raising additional cotton for the foreign market at the price he can get there? What do you think?

There is still a fourth possibility in working out a cotton program, and that is **to go along pretty much as we have been doing**, with a combination of loans, marketing quotas, and soil-conservation payments. We are all pretty well familiar with this program now. The present program combines a number of interrelated aims: (1) To secure a moderate adjustment of production in order to effect needed soil conservation, but also to permit a production which will enable us to sell a normal amount of cotton both at home and abroad; (2) to prevent ruinous price collapses through the combined influence of loans and marketing quotas. With respect to the loans, the aim is to prevent losses caused by temporary heavy surpluses, but not to raise prices so high as to discourage new uses or consumption; nor do we want to restrict our exports, or to load the Government with great amounts of cotton that it cannot dispose of.

Is our cotton-marketing problem a matter of pricing? How far will it be solved through finding new uses for cotton? How about treating the foreign market differently from the domestic market? What about the various ways of solving the problem: By adjusting acreage? by a loan policy? by marketing quotas? And at what price per pound should those loans be set—remembering that, with a production of 13 million bales, every cent additional costs the Government 65 million dollars, and that setting those loans at "parity" price will cost the Government over 500 million dollars?

UNIFORMITY AND QUALITY OF STAPLE

In order to understand how important this matter of quality and uniformity is, **imagine yourself in the place of a cotton manufacturer when he opens a bale of cotton.** Suppose the cotton has been badly baled, with some of the ties broken and the bagging badly ripped and torn, with evident traces of cotton having been jerked out in big wads. And suppose that the cotton is dirty, even far inside the bale. And suppose, even, that you find iron bolts or other scrap metal in the cotton, and that some of these bales contain cotton leaves and dirt or stones. These things have happened, and they have been reported back to the Department of Agriculture and to ginners and shippers. What do you suppose happens to the bid price when the buyer sees these things, or what do you think goes on in the manufacturer's mind if he finds these things out after he has bought the cotton? **What do you think happens to the reputation of American cotton** if much of that sort of thing goes on? **And what happens to prices** when that reputation begins to go down and the word is passed around among cotton buyers? Suppose you and your ginner are careful about such matters; is it any concern of yours that a neighboring ginner and his cotton farmers are careless? Or even the ginners and cotton growers of other States? **Are you your "brother's keeper"** in this sense? Should your growers' association take steps to correct this matter?

You may say that this is the ginner's fault, and so it may be. Then the question comes up, Have you any business to see to it that your ginner bales your cotton, and that of your neighbors, properly? To see to it that he puts only clean cotton in the bale, that he wraps and straps it properly, and perhaps even that he **marks the bale carefully** with his name and address, so that buyers know

who is responsible for the condition of that cotton? Perhaps you think that the ginner's business is none of your business, and the ginner may feel the same way about it. Isn't it? Or, is it? And perhaps if you think that this is a part of your business, there may be a further question. Suppose you bring in two and a half bales of cotton, and your neighbor brings in three and a half bales; and suppose that the ginner puts the two half bales of cotton together into one bale. But suppose you are raising **a different length staple** than your neighbor. It is fair to the buyer to include two different staples in one bale? Which price do you suppose that **mixed-staple** bale will bring when the buyer finds out what is in it; the price of the longer staple or of the shorter staple, or half-way between? If you think that it's the first or the third, you'd better think it over again. And now suppose that your staple is longer than your neighbor's, and that the ginner fills the insides of the six bales with your neighbor's cotton, and the outsides, or the tops and bottoms, with your cotton. **What price will the bale bring?** How long do you suppose the ginner can "get away with" that? Do you blame buyers for **"pulling" such big "samples"** from each bale each time they bid on it? Is that any concern of yours? Is much cotton wasted that way? And will you suffer any bad effects if the ginner does "get away with it" and the tricking is not discovered until after the bale has been sold and bought a number of times or even reaches the cotton mill? What if your ginner is an honest fellow, as most of them are, and bales his cotton properly, labels it with his name and address, and attaches a generous sample in an extra, dirt-proof bag? **Will the buyers believe him?** Or are the bad ginning practices so general that buyers won't believe any such thing and will insist on "sampling" the bale throughout? Is all of this any of your business?

What we are talking about here is something very fundamental. And that is, that **good staple brings a better price than poor staple;** and "poor" staple means

not only poor quality or short fiber, but mixed staple in a single bale. As a rule, **mixed staple brings only the price of the poorest staple in the mixture;** and, of course, other things like dirt or other foreign matter, bad wrapping, and so on, are also apt to lower the price. But let's stick to this matter of **uniform staple.** Unless there's some trickery involved, and somebody "gets away with it" for awhile, **a bale of uniform cotton staple brings a better price than one of mixed staple.** And that looks as if we now are on a problem that we can do something about. We may not be able to control the weather or our foreign markets, at least directly, and we may not be able to develop many new uses for cotton; but **we can do something about baling our cotton,** and perhaps we can do something about having our baled cotton of uniform staple.

The first thing we think of, in that connection, is **careful selection of seed**. How careful are you in selecting good seed? Sometimes a little extra effort, and a little extra price, will buy seed that will produce cotton of much better quality and of uniform staple. And that often means a much better price in the market, and even for you; generally **it pays well to plant that better seed.** The old idea, that better quality generally means a sacrifice of quantity, is no longer true. But just a word of caution: Don't accept the extravagant or unproved claims of every seed salesman that comes along. Check with your experiment station. And then when the buyer examines your uniform-staple cotton, he may be able to give you a better price for it than he does for the general run of cotton, and the ginner may be able to **put your name and address on the bale.** But the matter doesn't stop there. What about your neighbor? What if you and all your neighbors, or at least all the cotton growers that take their cotton to a certain gin, **get together and buy the same kind of seed,** so that every bale the ginner bales will have a uniform staple? **Do you think your ginner would be interested in such a proposition? Ask him!** You'll be surprised at the way he'll fall in with

your idea. Some ginning areas in the South, especially in the Southwest, have carried on such a plan for years, and the result of their work is showing in better prices for the cotton from those areas. And once you get your ginning area organized, with **all the cotton growers of a community producing a uniform staple,** you'll begin to see the improvement in prices. You may get so far along in this sort of community cooperation, with the ginner and the banker and the railroad agent also interested, that you may all agree to **select seed next year so as to grow a longer staple.** Cotton buyers will come to your community seeking your staple, instead of your having to hunt a buyer. And in that direction lies a **higher price for your cotton and a higher income for your farm.** It will take time and patience to do all these things, but keep at it. Other cotton-growing areas are doing it; why not yours?

Two major questions come up for discussion. In the first place, will a proper attention to uniform staple, and efforts to raise a longer staple, secure for you a better price for your cotton? What has been your experience along that line? And does it raise the price you get for cotton if your whole community has developed a uniform-staple policy in planting and ginning? And, in the second place, do such matters affect merely the price of your cotton in the market? Is there such a thing as losing a market altogether by failing to raise or gin good staple, or as acquiring a new market by the improved quality you may raise or ship?

The South is well adapted to raising good cotton. People say that the soil is poor, but they forget that land that is poor for some things is good for cotton; "poor" soil permits all the more the intelligent application of fertilizer. The physical soil basis is good. And the weather provides moisture and a long growing season. But what about cotton and the land?

WHAT COTTON DOES TO THE LAND

We now are on somewhat surer ground; there is less speculation about this point. **Cotton can ruin the land.** Not in the way some folks in the cities or "up North" think, however. Cotton, as a plant, does not take much nourishment out of the soil; and what little it does take is easily replaced by plowing under the stalks and adding fertilizer. The problem is not so much chemical or bacteriological, as it is physical. The fields have to be kept clear of weeds and grass, and the ground has to be kept stirred. And that means that, every time it rains, the good earth is ready to be washed away; especially if the cotton is planted on the sides of hills, and if the cotton rows run up and down the hills instead of following the contours. The South has learned a lot about "contour" plowing and listing, but we have just about caught up now with what Thomas Jefferson knew over a hundred years ago. And even with careful plowing, a hard rain will wash away considerable amounts of good soil. And leaching is always going on; the nourishing parts are being lost, and the soil needs fertilizer to build it up after each crop. And **the fertilizer doesn't last long if it isn't used to build other crops, especially grasses and legumes,** which add other soil needs and build up the humus and tie the whole topsoil together with roots and other fibers so that less washes away.

And since our foreign markets for cotton are no longer what they once were, and with an industrial depression happening every so often, and with "new uses" a good but slow way of developing our cotton markets, and with a serious price situation staring us in the face, and with our good land "going, going," and a lot of it already "gone"; **we seem to face the necessity of either cutting down**

the production of cotton, or trying to maintain that production at the expense of our good soil and in the face of a threat of lower prices. Which shall it be? Nobody likes to cut down the production of anything; we've already discussed that. But if that can be done at the same time that something good can also be done, perhaps the result will be best all around. We could, of course, sit around as we did once before, and watch **the boll weevil** crawl up from the Rio Grande and cross the Mississippi, and cut down our crop for us! And we might even put up a monument to the little "cuss" as one Alabama town did, because he taught us to get away from a one-crop system of farming and to go in for more diversification. But it does seem odd for human beings to let insects force them into good farming practices. And yet, that is just what the boll weevil did. Why can't we adopt and control our own farm policies?

There is no better farming practice than diversification, which generally means rotation of crops. It's good for the land, and it's good for farm income. **It's good for the land,** because it means that every so often the ground will be refreshed by grasses or clover or lespedeza, and it will have a chance to build itself up again. **It's good for farm income,** because a variety of crops will not only provide more good food for the family and the work-stock, but also because the weather which may hurt some crops may help others. Cash income may not reach such high levels in certain years, as with a cotton cash crop; but over the years it will be more certain. Shouldn't the farmer today be getting to think, like the city worker, more and more about **income security,** and less and less about "making a killing" by a single crop? That extra half-acre of cotton land around the house may bring better results in the long run if it is planted to garden. And one-third of the land put into pasture, with plenty of clover seed scattered about will in the long run be better for the land than the extra amount of cotton it can produce. If you diversified your farm production more, how much could

you increase your net income by spending less cash for food?

We have treated our land badly, and few places are more in need of rebuilding the soil than our Southern States east of the Mississippi. **Shall we abandon that land,** as it becomes so poor as to be almost worthless? **What would we do with the people** that would have to move off? Of course, there are the better lands that have lately been opened up in Texas and Oklahoma, and even farther west. Some folks out there can't understand why we need a cotton program—at least, more of them think that way out there than in the east. This **shift of the cotton-growing area** westward has been a tremendous thing; but it can also be an awful thing for the old South. What can the eastern cotton farmer do? Go in for as much production as the land will stand and trust to the future to work things out? Examine the land carefully and see what it needs, and then do that? Go in heavily for a cash crop, and buy food? Or raise more "home supplies," enough so as to be more "self-sustaining," and plant only the rest of the land to cotton? **Are our cotton farms too small** to do what the land needs? **Can we follow what we all know to be good farming practices without some help from the Government,** especially now that the land has gotten into such awfully bad shape? Shall we try to save our land, and leave it in better shape than when we first got it—or perhaps even put it into better shape each year—and at first not have quite so large an income; but with better and better land, increase our production and income in later years? Or shall we strip our land of every bit of nourishment it has, so as to get the biggest possible income from it this year, and keep on stripping it, with constantly lower yields, and then watch it wash away, slowly year by year, but every so often see the gulleys deepen fast, and watch huge pieces of the land break off and slide down into the rivers?

THE COTTON PROGRAM

We have now discussed the problems of the **foreign and other markets** for cotton. Perhaps we can do something about those matters, and perhaps we can also develop **new uses for cotton, or improve the cotton staple,** so as to improve the sales and prices of cotton. We have also discussed **the weather** and decided that, although we couldn't do much about it, we could try to learn more about it and how to adjust ourselves to it. And then we talked about **the land,** and what cotton does to it, and what we might do about that; in this connection, we discussed **farm management** and what a sound system of rotation of crops would do to help us solve our cotton problem. Now, let's just face the situation frankly and realize that a great many people think that all of these things pretty much tell the whole story of cotton; that here we know what we can do and what we cannot do, and that **that's about as far as we can go or as we ought to go.** When anyone suggests that we ought to go further, that **we ought to have a national farm program** or a program for all the cotton growers of the country, these people say "No, we've gone far enough without bringing the Government into the picture." And those people have a right to their opinion. The only question we would raise is, **Have they thought the problem through?**

The first thing we have to understand about the farm program in general is that Congress passed the various acts, and that the President signed them, and that this national legislation put the program into effect. Some people think that the Department of Agriculture is the only part of the Government which is responsible for these laws. The laws do give a lot of leeway to the Department as to the way they are to be carried out; and sometimes the field men of the Department do not do as good a job as they might of applying the law to the case at hand. For

such things the Department is especially responsible, and any complaints over such matters should be addressed to your county agent or county committeemen, or finally to the Secretary. **No law is so perfect that it doesn't hurt somebody. And no law is so well drawn as to be foolproof**—the men who administer it in the field, and on your farm, are liable to make mistakes. But the law provides for executive officers in your own community—the county agent and the committeemen—who are there for the purpose of **giving you a chance to keep in touch with your Government.** You elect your own committeemen every year by the majority rule, and your vote counts just as much as that of anyone else—but no more than any other person's. Although you vote for Congressmen only every 2 years, and for President every 4 years; **you elect your committeemen every year, and you can see your county agent almost any time.** So you see, under the farm bill, we are working toward a real **economic democracy.**

Now what does **the Agricultural Act of 1938** say about cotton? Among other things its says that:

1. (Sec. 342.) "Not later than November 15 of each year the Secretary (of Agriculture) shall find and proclaim (a) the total supply, the normal supply, and the carry-over of cotton as of August 1 of such year, (b) The probable domestic consumption of American cotton during the marketing year commencing August 1 of such year, (c) the probable exports of American cotton during such marketing year, and (d) the estimated carry-over of cotton as of the next succeeding August 1."

2. (Sec. 343 (a).) "Not later than November 15 of each year the Secretary shall find and proclaim the amount of the national allotment of cotton for the succeeding calendar year * * * to make available a supply of cotton * * * equal to the normal supply."

3. (Sec. 343 (b).) This national allotment, for 1938 and 1939, is to be not less than ten million bales nor more than eleven million five hundred thousand bales.

4. (Sec. 344 (a).) "The national allotment for cotton for each year * * * shall be apportioned by the Secretary among the States on the basis of" the preceding 5-year average production, in pounds, of each State.

5. (Sec. 344 (b).) The Secretary shall then find out the number of acres in each State which normally produce an amount of cotton equal to that State's allotment; this will be the "State acreage allotment."

6. (Sec. 344 (c).) "The State acreage allotment shall be apportioned annually by the Secretary to the counties in the State * * * on the basis of" their previous 5-year averages.

7. (Sec. 344 (d).) "The allotment apportioned to the county * * * shall be apportioned by the Secretary, through the local committees, among the farms within the county * * *."

8. (Sec. 344 (d).) Allotments shall first be made, not to exceed 5 acres, to all farmers in the county; those who had not, during the previous 3 years, planted as much as 5 acres to cotton, shall receive as their allotment the highest acreage which they did plant during that period.

9. (Sec. 344 (d).) The remaining acreage is allotted to farmers whose acreage was more than 5 acres during the preceding year.

The law then becomes involved in details which the county and local committees have to work out and settle for each farmer in the county. The Department issued a bulletin April 16, 1938, telling about these details, and this bulletin will be sent you on request. There are some "ifs" and "excepts" for some of the statements we have just quoted from the law, but the main idea is there. It simply amounts to this, that **the cooperating cotton farmer is limiting his acreage so as to produce less cotton, so that there will finally be a "normal" carry-over instead of a big surplus which keeps the price down.** The main issue is, therefore, between those people who agree with this method of handling the cotton problem, and those who think that production and prices should be let alone to "seek their own level." And these people claim that, if production and stocks should increase, the price will go down, and then more cotton will be sold, and in that way we shall get out of our present muddle. This fundamental issue should not be lost sight of.

Now the farm bill of 1938 again goes on record:

1. (Sec. 345.) "Whenever the Secretary determines that the total supply of cotton for any marketing year exceeds by more than 7 per centum the normal supply thereof * * * he shall proclaim such fact not later than November 15 * * * and marketing quotas shall be in effect during the next succeeding marketing year * * *" provided a referendum of the cotton farmers turns out favorable to this program.

2. (Sec. 346 (a).) "The farm marketing quota for cotton for any farm for any marketing year shall be a number of bales of cotton equal to the sum of:

"(1) A number of bales equal to the normal production or the actual production, whichever is greater, of the farm acreage allotment, and

"(2) A number of bales equal to the amount * * * of cotton from any previous crop which the farmer has on hand which * * * could have been marketed without penalty."

3. (Sec. 348.) "Any farmer who, while farm marketing quotas are in effect, markets cotton in excess of" his "farm marketing quota" * * * "shall be subject to" a penalty of "2 cents per pound" * * *.

4. (Sec. 349.) "Any person who knowingly plants cotton on his farm in any year on an acreage in excess of the farm acreage allotment * * * shall not be eligible for any payment for such year under the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, as amended."

Again we have omitted details of the law, and a great deal of figuring and adjustment will have to be made for each farm by the county committee. But the main principles have been given. And, since they are written down in the law, the Department has no choice in the matter; it must enforce the law. Those people who do not like the law will get nowhere by criticising the Department or by trying to get it to change the law or to refrain from enforcing some provisions of it. What these people need to do is to seek, through the channels provided by the Constitution and our democratic form of Government, to bring about changes in national legislation. What do you think of the cotton provisions of the Farm Act of 1938? Have you read the law? You can secure a copy of it by writing to the United States Department of Agriculture. Here are the main points to keep in mind:

1. **The acreage allotments** for each farm are made on the basis of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, as amended by the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938; and the national and State acreage limits, on which individual allotments are based, are fairly definitely determined by this legislation, and are not affected by the cotton-referendum vote.

2. **The marketing quotas** are an additional means of enforcing the acreage allotments; marketing quotas do not go into effect unless two-thirds of the producers of that commodity who vote in the referendum vote "Yes"; but an unfavorable referendum vote has no effect on the individual acreage allotments which are made on the basis of the farm bills now in operation.

ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY—THE COTTON REFERENDUM AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM

We have spent a considerable amount of time stating what the law provides as regards the farm program, because people should get clearly in their minds the fact that Congress and the President, as well as the Department of Agriculture, are responsible for the law. But when we come to **the administration of the law,** then the Department of Agriculture begins to bear the major responsibility. **In the case of the Farm Act of 1938, Congress went further than before in writing into the law the way it should be carried out.** This is in line with our American idea that "this is a country of laws, and not of men." **We are very careful to write all possible details into our laws,** because we don't want our Government officials to have too much freedom in carrying out the laws. What do you think about this? **Some people think that the Farm Act of 1938 is too technical,** and that the A. A. A. or the committeemen should have been given more leeway in administering the law. But that is a matter of opinion. If you think that the Farm Act of 1938 is complicated, you ought to see some of the tariff laws. At any rate, there the law is; and **it is up to the Federal and State officials, and the county and community committeemen, to carry it out to the best of their ability.**

But anyone who has ever had anything to do with enforcing a law or having it enforced on him, knows that **it is a long, long way between good legislation and good government.** One of the besetting sins of us Americans is that we seem to think that every time we get into trouble all we can or need to do is to "have a law on the subject." And then, once we get a law on the statute books, we forget all about it; we have become a nation of lawbreakers, and we forget that **in a democratic society everyone ought to feel especially obliged to obey the law and to help**

in every way to see that it is enforced. Now, the Farm Act of 1938 recognizes this very idea. As we have said before, the act determines what the national production is to be, and it states quite definitely how the acreage allotment for each State is to be determined and how that State allotment is to be apportioned among the counties and the individual farms. But it also provides that, before marketing quotas go into effect as regards any of the five listed commodities—cotton, corn, wheat, rice, tobacco—**a referendum** shall be held among the growers of that product, to see whether the farmers who produce that commodity want the law to apply to it. Under the Bankhead Act, a referendum of this sort was held among cotton growers in 1935; and under the Farm Act of 1938, a cotton referendum was held on March 12, 1938. Each person engaged in producing cotton—farm owner and manager, and each tenant, whether cash renter or share cropper—had one vote and only one vote; and if two-thirds of those voting in the referendum throughout the country voted "Yes," the marketing quotas provided in the act of 1938 were to go into effect. The referendum on March 12 showed a favorable vote of over 90 percent, so the marketing quotas went into effect for all cotton growers, regardless of the fact that some counties or some regions did not poll a two-thirds favorable vote.

Now the question on which the cotton farmer voted in March was:

Do you favor cotton-marketing quotas for the 1938 crop?

YES ☐ NO ☐

(Mark one square with an X showing which way you vote)

The first question which came up in every cotton farmer's mind was, **What is this going to do to my cotton acreage?** And in the meetings held before the referendum, that question came up again and again. Now, the simple answer is, that the vote in the referendum had nothing to do with acreage allotments; they were definitely provided for under the law. But the farmer's question was, How

many acres will I be allotted on my farm? And he didn't know the answer when he voted in the referendum.

The result was that many a farmer went to the polls in the cotton referendum of 1938 with the feeling that he was voting for "a pig in a poke." And, after the referendum, when some farmers began to find out about how small their cotton acreage would be, they began to feel pretty strongly that they had voted for "a pig in a poke." As a matter of fact, the law had already put the pig in the poke (if there was one); but the farmer didn't yet know just how big the pig was. And when some people reported that a number of farmers would have voted differently if they had known what a favorable referendum vote would do to their cotton acreage, they missed the point completely, because the referendum was not on the acreage allotments, but determined whether marketing quotas should go into effect to enforce such acreage allotments as would be made anyway. A number of letters received by the Department of Agriculture stated that farmers ought to have been told just what their allotments were going to be before they voted in such a referendum. Perhaps you agree with this point of view. What do you think about it?

Let us remember that the law does not require that these acreage allotments be worked out before the referendum vote is taken, and the referendum vote had no effect on the size of these allotments; therefore, it becomes **a matter of administrative policy** of the Department of Agriculture to decide **whether those acreage allotments shall be figured out before the referendum is held.** In the case of the cotton referendum of March, 1938, this probably would have been impossible, since the referendum had to be held so soon after the Act was passed, because cotton-planting time was right upon us. But that may not be the case the next time a referendum is held. Therefore, a great deal of care should be taken to decide this important point. And you, as a member of this economic democracy of agriculture, should think about this problem and make your feelings and judgments heard. How would you vote on a policy of this sort?

Just what is this referendum method to decide? We have already stated the views of those who think that each cotton farmer should vote as to whether he is satisfied with the acreage allotment and marketing quota he thinks is going to be given to his farm under the law. Was that the issue? Aside from the fact that it was marketing quotas, and not acreage allotments that were being voted on, there's something more to be considered. **Isn't the question a national one, a problem of public policy, rather than of individual, selfish interest?** The law provides that all allotments be made "equitably" among all cotton farmers, therefore **every farmer can be sure that he will be treated like every other farmer,** except for those isolated cases of injustice that every law involves. True, in the act itself, the "little farmer" was to be taken care of first, and the big plantations faced the biggest acreage reductions; but later amendments took care of a great part of this item, so that every farmer can feel pretty certain that he will be treated as fairly as any other cotton farmer under this act. And then, if a particular farmer still thinks that he has not been dealt with fairly, **he can take the matter up with his own committeemen;** and he can even appeal to the officers "higher up" if he doesn't feel satisfied with the judgment of his own committeemen. And, after all, isn't the real farm problem today **to get every farmer to see the situation from the national point of view?** Do we want a farm program which is sound from the all-round point of view, with every farmer sharing fairly in whatever results from such a program; or a farm program which each farmer judges solely by the amount he can "get out of it"? **Isn't this idea, of every fellow trying to "get his," just what has gotten us into trouble before?**

But there is one thing more that we must not forget; and that is, that **democracy means and requires full discussion of all public affairs.** The first thing that happens when a dictatorship is set up, is that the newspapers and radios are censored, and people are prevented from speaking their minds freely. People can or may think

what they please, in a dictatorship, but they are not allowed to say what they think. **Democracy,** on the other hand, means not only the spirit of tolerance, with free election systems, and referenda, letting all views be fully expressed; but it also **is a faith in the thinking and ability of the common man,** a belief that what he thinks and what he has to say is worth while to society. Who knows but that an idea, developed by a farmer or a farmer's wife, or some of these young farm boys and girls who are interested in the future of farm life; who knows, we repeat, but that an idea like that may contribute to the improvement of agriculture in a community, or a region, or throughout the Nation? **And what better test is there of an idea than to talk it over with someone else,** or with a group of people? The political greatness of England is largely due to the fact that English people have for centuries spoken their minds among their fellow citizens. The ancient Greeks were great talkers; they liked to gather in the "market-place" and talk things over among themselves, and they were among the earliest peoples to have an "assembly" to talk over public policies. Some of the great things they did along other lines—philosophy, drama, science—were probably made possible because the Greeks had previously been sharpening their wits by talking over all sorts of things freely among themselves. Greece was not really a nation; it was a cluster of small communities, located on islands and in small valleys. And these communities were the first places to develop a democratic form of government, with free discussion as a basis. England and the Scandinavian countries likewise built up their democracies on the basis of **community discussion of community problems.** And we in America can well look to the small communities and to community discussion groups, to keep alive and strong the spirit of democracy at the "grass roots" of our society.

There are, of course, those who are impatient with discussion as a way of getting things done. "Talk! talk! talk!" they say, "and what comes of it?" They point to the fact that representative assemblies especially in some

parts of Europe, recently practically talked themselves out of existence. And this is quite true. It can even be said that the dictatorships in modern Europe came about not through a "strong man" but rather because of the failure of the parliaments of those countries to get anywhere with their talking. It was a case of "Rome burning while Nero fiddled." **And one of the great dangers confronting our own democracy is that talk alone may go on,** in our representative assemblies, or in popular meetings or even in small groups, **without leading to any constructive social policies or action.** We have even lost the art of conversation. The "grouch" may "get things off his chest," and that is a very important value of free speech and free discussion; but that is not enough. **The chief value of discussion is that it can economically consider policies,** many of which if actually worked out would be expensive, especially if they proved to be bad policies. People can discuss policies and exchange ideas before actually trying them out, and thereby discover their weaknesses or defects; if all such policies or ideas were actually worked out the results might be very expensive. But **discussion ought to lead somewhere;** and there is no better way of developing a sound national farm program, or a community program, than to make that the point of a small discussion group of 15 to 20 people, meeting regularly every 2 weeks or so and taking up one thing at a time. Action will follow, once the thoughts of a group begin to "jell." What is wanted is a wise leader, who will not only let everyone have his say, but who also will lead the feeling and the thinking of the group toward **some definite policy of benefit to the community and to the Nation.**

The American farmer is being given a chance today to work out his own farm program as he never had before. Oh, yes, in "the good old days" when farms were to be had for the asking or taking, a farmer could do with his own pretty much as he pleased. But those days are over. Farm lands are no longer so easy to get. What your neighbor does or even what a lot of

farmers in other parts of the country or of the world do, now affects you. **And farmers have to get together to solve the problems that arise from this competition.** They cannot act in the strictly democratic way by all taking a hand in the making of policy, but everyone can have his say. And a way has been made for having farmers elect community committeemen each year as their representatives. And all of the community committeemen of a county act together as a council and elect a county committee. **It is your business to see that the best men, the most respected farmers, are elected to these jobs.** And those county committeemen not only administer the law in your county, but their ideas and perhaps even yours, if you tell the committeemen what they are, are sent up to your State Agricultural Conservation Committee to **formulate the policies of your community,** your county, your agricultural region. And the State committee not only administers the law in your State, but also maintains constant contact with the Department of Agriculture at Washington, advising it as to how the program is working and as to how it may be improved. If you don't like the present farm program, say so among your neighbors; or, better yet, make some constructive suggestion for improving it. If your neighbor doesn't like the program, but you do, talk it over with him; you may both learn something.

See what you can do during the winter in a discussion group of 10 or 12 farm men and women, meeting every 2 weeks or once a month. **Backed by the opinions of farm men and women,** threshed out in small group discussions, **the program of such an organization becomes a truly effective policy of a democratic society. This is your organization.** Use it; take part in it. Vote whenever you get a chance. If you are elected a committeeman, **take your responsibilities seriously.** Make yourself felt in the forming of sounder programs and in administering this one as well as you can. The farm program—What's it all about? **You ought to know.** What about cotton? **That's up to you.**

MORE ABOUT THE COTTON SITUATION

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